

City of East Ridge

Recreation Facilities Plan: 2018-2023

City of East Ridge
Recreation Facilities Plan: 2018-2023

prepared by

The Citizens of East Ridge
East Ridge City Council
East Ridge Department of Parks and Recreation
Southeast Tennessee Development

Adopted _____, 2017

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Resolution No. ____

**A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE
CITY OF EAST RIDGE RECREATION FACILITIES PLAN: 2018-2023**

WHEREAS the East Ridge City Council wishes to plan for the city's recreation facilities, programs, and needs for the long term, especially with respect to areas west of Interstate 75 where there is a need for additional recreational facilities and opportunities; and

WHEREAS an updated recreation plan is required to address changing needs of the community, new development patterns, and emerging demographic trends; and

WHEREAS various grant programs require applicants to possess a recreation plan that has been updated in the previous five years and which includes a significant and well-documented public involvement component; and

WHEREAS the limited available property within the city necessitates a carefully considered plan which provides a framework for the neat and orderly development of recreational facilities and amenities in East Ridge; and

WHEREAS the City of East Ridge Municipal Planning Commission recommended the East Ridge Parks Recreation Facilities Plan: 2018-2023 to the City Council for adoption on _____, 2017; and

WHEREAS the City of East Ridge Parks and Recreation Board recommended the East Ridge Parks Recreation Facilities Plan: 2018-2023 to the City Council for adoption on _____, 2017.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and City Council of East Ridge, Tennessee, that the City of East Ridge Parks Recreation Facilities Plan: 2018-2023 is hereby adopted, the public welfare requiring it.

Adopted: _____, 2017

Mayor Brent Lambert

Attest: _____
City Recorder

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2016, the City of East Ridge implemented a one-year planning process to update the East Ridge Recreation Plan, which was last updated in 2010. The key objectives of the new plan were to review previous proposals for recreation development in East Ridge, and to identify projects that will meet the current and future recreation needs of the community. City leaders also made clear that public involvement and community engagement were paramount to creating a successful plan. In order for any plan to reflect the wants and needs of the community, it must be guided by members from that community. More than 200 East Ridge citizens and park users participated in the public involvement activities and contributed to this plan.

East Ridge partnered with Southeast Tennessee Development (SETD) to conduct the public involvement activities and to write the plan. The planning process included the following exercises:

1. Inventory existing conditions;
2. Review previous plans and proposals;
3. Identify needs and concerns of city staff and elected officials;
4. Community involvement exercises;
5. Analyze public input results;
6. Identify priority projects; and
7. Formulate and develop plan.

The City of East Ridge Recreation Facilities Plan: 2018-2023 is the written synopsis of the planning process. The plan includes an overview of existing public recreation facilities along with suggested improvements and proposed future amenities at publicly owned recreation sites in East Ridge.

It should be noted that discussions regarding funding and improvements for Camp Jordan were well underway by the time this planning process started. As a result, the City instructed the project team to instead focus primarily on recreation improvements outside of Camp Jordan. Even so, the plan does include an inventory of existing facilities and numerous recommendations for Camp Jordan. These are included in response to

citizen safety concerns as well as suggestions for future programming.

The plan focuses primarily on Springvale Park, the Municipal Complex, and East Ridge High School. The proximity of these properties to the city center makes them ideally located for public recreation development. The planning team worked with city leaders to evaluate community needs and wishes for future recreation opportunities.

The PRIORITY PROJECTS identified in this plan are:

- 1. Improve Pioneer Frontier playground**
- 2. Upgrade baseball facilities , restrooms, and concessions at Camp Jordan Park**
- 3. Construct a splash pad at the municipal complex**
- 4. Construct a dog park at Springvale Park**
- 5. Construct an open-air, covered multiuse pavilion at the municipal complex**

Details and justification for these projects are included throughout the plan.

East Ridge is a city on the move. While this plan was being written, the city was pursuing funding for large-scale investments at Camp Jordan while simultaneously proceeding with construction at Exit 1. It acquired the athletic complex at East Ridge High School, and also voted to initiate a master-planning process for the East Ridge Town Center. In response to the public comments received during the planning phase, staff has already implemented changes and worked to address citizen concerns. Finally, the city is working with TDOT on several projects to drastically improve pedestrian infrastructure and accessibility throughout the downtown corridor. These efforts are laying the foundation for new private sector investment and redevelopment. Together with the enhancements proposed in this recreation plan, the City of East Ridge is well-positioned to become one of the most livable, accessible, and active cities in Southeast Tennessee.

Overview

COMMUNITY QUICKFACTS

Land Area: **8.3 square miles**

2016 East Ridge Population: **21,302**

2010-2016 East Ridge Growth: **1.5%**

2010-2016 Hamilton Co. Growth: **6.3%**

Nearly **1.5 million people** within a 60-mile drive

Approximately **130,000 daily vehicle trips** through East Ridge

The City of East Ridge Recreation Facilities

Plan: 2018-2023 sets forth the community's vision for its recreational facilities and programming for the next five years. This plan identifies goals for the Parks and Recreation Department and prioritizes specific projects aimed at increasing the availability and accessibility of recreational opportunities in East Ridge.

Recreation has an enormous impact on East Ridge and the greater Chattanooga community. According to a 2016 report, Camp Jordan Park alone generates nearly \$10 million in economic impacts to East Ridge and Hamilton County every year. In addition, Camp Jordan attracted over 231,000 visitors from outside East Ridge in 2015. These tourists and visitors spend money in area hotels, gas stations, restaurants, and other businesses, generating significant tax revenues for local governments throughout the region. The city realized a nearly 3x return on its investment in Camp Jordan Park for 2015. While the economic impacts of the city's other recreation facilities have not been studied in depth, the Camp Jordan report demonstrates how much of an asset recreation is for East Ridge.

Planning is essential for East Ridge given that the city is "landlocked" by Chattanooga and the Georgia state line. The city has a finite area in which to grow, develop, and provide services for its residents and businesses. Each development decision must be carefully considered due to the associated opportunity costs. Lands reserved for public use reduce the tax base and limit capacity for future business and residential development. However, recreational amenities and public spaces are essential for any urbanized community, and when properly located and successfully implemented, these public projects can spur significant private sector residential and business investment. By being proactive and planning

now, East Ridge can expect to see significant rewards that benefit all its residents and visitors in the future.

A current recreation plan is important as the city prepares its future budget and seeks funding sources to upgrade existing facilities and install new ones. Eligibility for certain state grants including the Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is dependent on having a recreation plan that has been updated within the previous five years. East Ridge's previous recreation plan was updated in 2010. In order to apply for LPRF or RTP funds in the coming years, a current recreation plan was needed that sets forth the projects and priorities for East Ridge.

This plan was developed over 2016 and 2017 and is the culmination of numerous public meetings and strategic planning sessions with city officials. Most importantly, it relies strongly on input from East Ridge citizens collected through surveys, mapping exercises, and visioning sessions. Input was also received from non-residents who travel to East Ridge to use the city's recreation facilities.

It should be noted that this plan primarily focuses on recreational facilities and opportunities outside of Camp Jordan Park. Early in the planning process, the city expressed a desire to explore opportunities that would expand and improve recreational facilities in areas west of Interstate 75—a desire that was reinforced through the community involvement process. Camp Jordan is a regional asset with year-round sports tournaments, recreational programming, and other special events. The unique needs and challenges of Camp Jordan are being addressed through master planning efforts outside the scope of this recreation plan. Instead, the role of this plan is to present recreation opportunities that will more immediately serve the needs of East Ridge in

locations that are accessible and convenient for East Ridge residents and families.

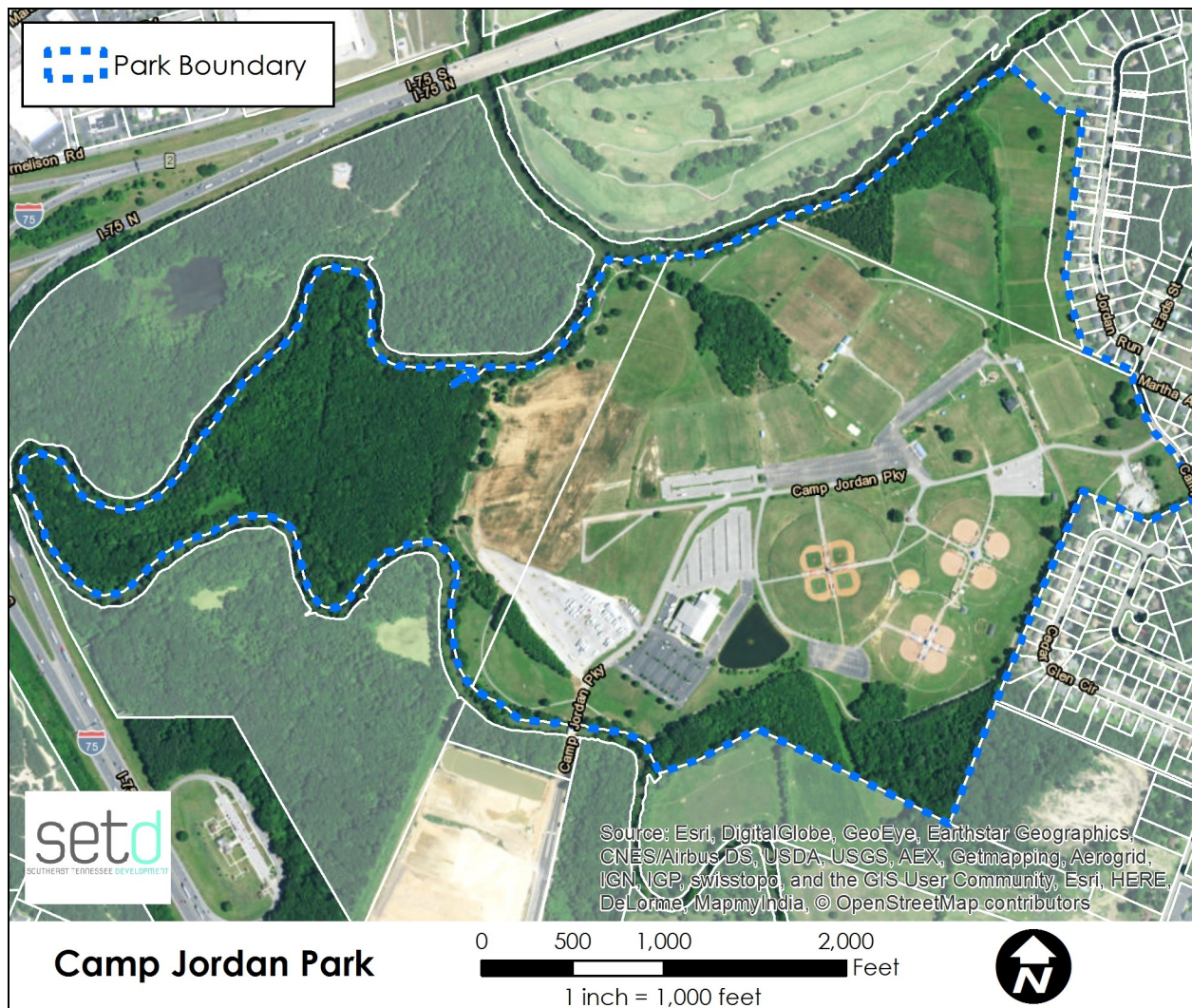
The proposals in this plan are meant to inform decision-making over the planning horizon. Circumstances change and new opportunities present themselves. Such was the case with the former community pool property. In 2014, East Ridge city received funding to remove the pool and develop this property as a multi-use recreational complex. However, the city received an offer to purchase the property and have it developed as a commercial center, and it is now contributing substantially to the city's tax base. City leaders must balance priorities and make decisions that are in the best interest of East Ridge citizens. Consequently, the city should review this plan on an ongoing basis for relevancy and consistency with other projects and development trends, and update the plan as needed.

Finally, the proposals in this plan make every effort to accommodate the needs of all East Ridge citizens, inclusive of every race, age, gender, ability, and income level. East Ridge—and all of America—is getting older and becoming more diverse. Today, Hamilton County's senior population (ages 65+) is about 60,000. By 2030, it will increase to an estimated 90,000—a 50% increase from today. Younger generations are more diverse and come from cultural backgrounds with different recreation traditions and preferences. To ensure projects become assets for the community and to meet the desires and needs of its residents, East Ridge must recognize these changing demographics and make reasonable accommodations to serve and benefit the entire community.



Camp Jordan Park





OVERVIEW

At 277 acres, Camp Jordan Park is the largest park in East Ridge and one of the premiere recreation facilities in the tri-state region. With numerous tournaments, sports leagues, special events, trade shows, and other scheduled programming, the park remains busy year-round, hosting over 70 events in 2015 alone.

As mentioned in the introduction, Camp Jordan is responsible for nearly \$10 million in economic impacts to East Ridge and Hamilton County every year. In 2015, the park attracted more than 231,000 visitors from outside East Ridge. Indeed, Camp Jordan is a major asset for East Ridge and the region.

Concept Plans in Process

Because of its size, number of facilities, and intensity of programming, the City of East Ridge is considering various proposals and significant investments to improve Camp Jordan Park. Among the priority needs are new fencing, restrooms, concessions, and other projects that will capitalize on Camp Jordan's successes and make it an even greater economic driver for the region. Consequently, this 2018-2023 plan documents existing conditions and needs without proposing additional facilities or major changes at Camp Jordan. These needs are being investigated separately with the anticipation of significant capital investments being made outside the scope of this planning process.

Existing Facilities

Camp Jordan Arena



Camp Jordan Arena | Image Source: East Ridge Parks & Recreation

Located along Camp Jordan Parkway near the southern entrance of the park, Camp Jordan arena is a 34,000 square foot climate-controlled facility featuring 27,000 square feet of exhibition space and capacity for 5,000 people, depending on the event. The arena is popular for trade shows and other indoor events throughout the year. During the winter months, the facility hosts youth and adult indoor soccer leagues. Floor plans and use fees are listed on the Parks and Recreation website.

Maintenance and Needs

In 2015, East Ridge received a \$72,540 TDEC clean energy grant to upgrade the arena's HVAC systems to newer, more energy efficient units. The FY 2017 budget included \$55,000 to replace the carpet for indoor soccer. In the next few years, an estimated \$100,000 will be needed to replace the roof, which is deteriorated and leaking.

Amphitheater



Camp Jordan Amphitheater | Image Source: East Ridge Parks & Recreation

The amphitheater at Camp Jordan is a covered stage which can host a variety of outdoor events. It features dressing rooms, restrooms, stage lighting, storage, and electrical service. A fence surrounds 7 acres in front of the stage, which makes it ideal for ticketed events such as J-Fest and Bugapalooza. Located nearby the amphitheater are a pavilion with kitchen facilities, parking, and a playground.

Maintenance and Needs

Routine maintenance should be performed at the amphitheater in order to keep the structure and its stage components in good working order.

Walking Track



Camp Jordan Walking Track
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee
Development

The Walking Track at Camp Jordan is a paved-surface, multi-use path which follows the perimeter of the main park facilities. Runners, walkers, and cyclists can follow the 2.0-mile loop track as it leads users through fields, wooded areas, wetlands, and alongside creeks. One of the main appeals of the track is how even and flat it is for its entire extent, which makes it ideal for easy walking, beginner bike riders, and parents with strollers. In addition, the track is sometimes used for 5K races and other charity events. The track is also dog-friendly, which distinguishes it from Chattanooga's Riverwalk. All in all, the Walking Track is one of Camp Jordan's most popular and well-utilized recreational amenities.

Maintenance and Needs

The Walking Track is to be repaired in the near term as the result of a settlement with the contractor which repaved it several years ago. Consequently, the track will have 2 inches of fresh pavement, which should last well beyond the 5-year planning horizon. In the short term, however, staff should monitor the track for cracking and subsidence problems that might arise from flooding.

Soccer Fields and Stadium



Camp Jordan Soccer Fields
Image Source: Google Maps

Camp Jordan also includes the East Ridge Soccer Complex, a facility that includes eight lighted FIFA regulation-sized fields. The complex is home to the East Ridge Futbol Club and is also used by high school and college athletics.

In addition to the eight fields at the soccer complex, Camp Jordan also features the Weldon Osborne Soccer Stadium. This venue is ideal for large-spectator games and is equipped with broadcast-grade lighting.

Maintenance and Needs

New fencing, seats, a press box, concessions, and a turf field are proposed at Osborne Stadium. Around the rest of the fields, fencing and a paved cart path are proposed to increase accessibility.

Camp Jordan Baseball/Softball Fields



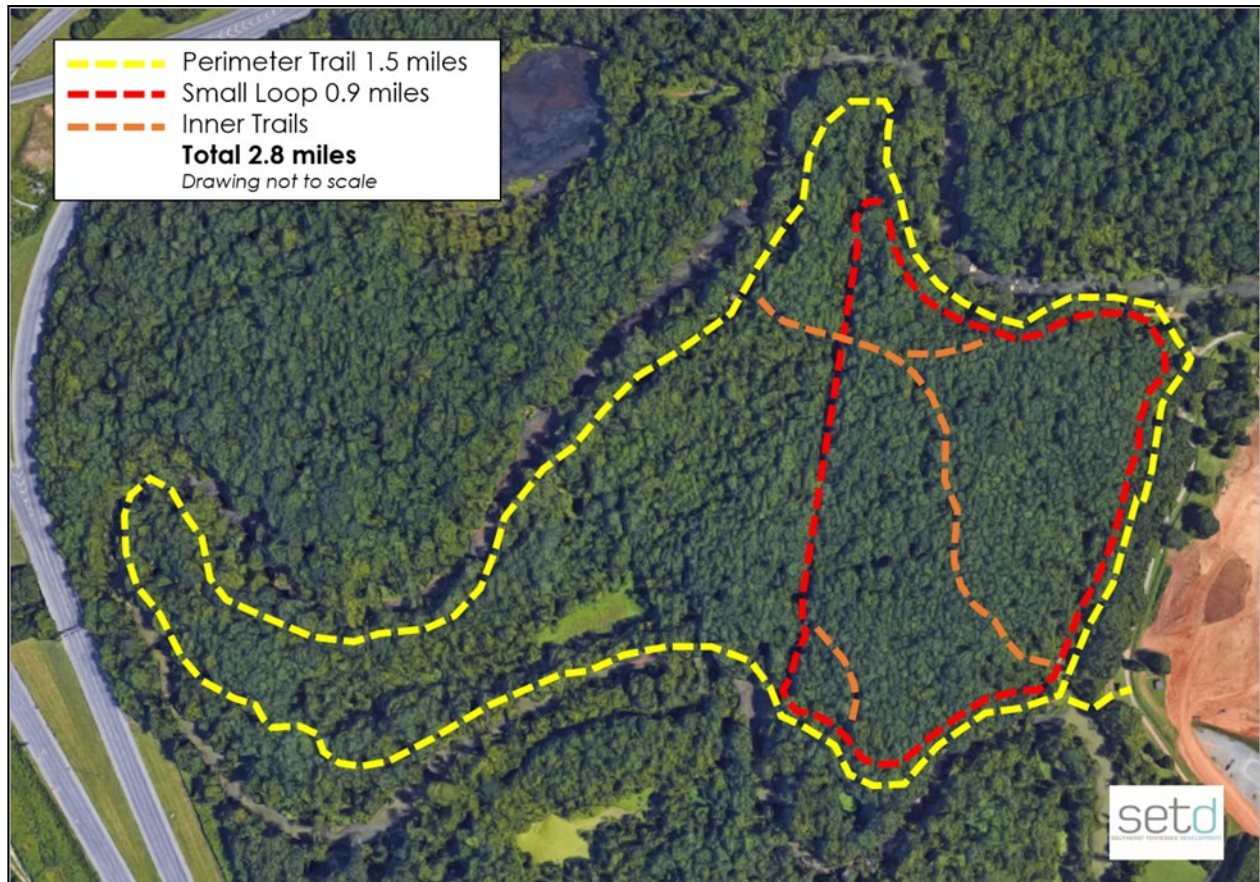
Camp Jordan Baseball Fields | Image Source: Google Maps

The facilities at Camp Jordan offer some of the best playing fields for baseball and softball in the Tri-State Region. A total of twelve full-size fields and one kids' field enable Camp Jordan to host many tournaments throughout the season. The Quad, visible above, is a series of four 300-foot-plus baseball fields with bermuda grass infields. Musco lighting allows for evening games and provides players with the feeling of playing in a professional ball park setting. Concessions, dugouts, spectator stands, and restrooms all help support game operations at Camp Jordan.

Maintenance and Needs

Because of their heavy use and number of people that the ball fields attract, a number of facility and grounds improvements are needed in order to improve the experience of visitors and players. Of greatest need are fencing and improved restroom facilities. Preferably, the restrooms will be climate-controlled and in a location where they would be available to park users year-round.

Nature Trails



Map of Camp Jordan Nature Trails | Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

With a total distance of approximately 2.8 miles, Camp Jordan's nature trails follow West Chickamauga Creek and takes hikers and trail runners through heavily wooded and wetland environments. Visitors often prefer these trails instead of the paved walking track due to their ruggedness and scenery. The trailhead of the nature trail is situated along the western segment of the paved walking track.

West Chickamauga Creek flows throughout Camp Jordan and is responsible for many of the flooding problems throughout the park. Spring Creek flows into West Chickamauga Creek, which then empties into the South Chickamauga Creek which eventually connects to the Tennessee River. The creek is not navigable with motorized craft but is popular with kayakers, canoers, and paddleboarders. Unfortunately, Spring Creek and the Chickamauga Creek system are on Tennessee's 303(d) list of impaired water bodies. Urban stormwater runoff as well as collection

system failures result in elevated levels of *E. coli* and other contaminants. The City of East Ridge is working with state and regional partners to eliminate sewer overflows and improve water quality. In the meantime, individuals who enter the creeks should be mindful of the potential health risks.

Maintenance and Needs

Regular trail maintenance is needed to reduce erosion and ensure the trail remains accessible year-round. Some signage is posted, but additional signage may be installed.

This area of the park is becoming increasingly popular with kayakers and paddleboarders. Currently, there are two canoe launches. Safety signage is needed alert paddlers about water hazards as well as to illustrate the extent of the creek system, which eventually connects to the Tennessee River.

Playground at Camp Jordan



Camp Jordan Playground
Image Source: East Ridge Parks & Recreation

The playground at Camp Jordan includes two separate play areas: one for younger children, ages 2-5; and one for older kids, ages 5-12. East Ridge received the equipment at a significant discount from Gametime, a national playground company, in 2015 as a turnkey demonstration project featuring its new product line. Since being installed at the park, the playgrounds have been extremely popular for families and children. New swings are currently being installed.

Maintenance and Needs

The playground is still fairly new and in good condition. As with all public facilities, vandalism is always a concern, but so far there have been no issues. Additional wood chips will be added as needed.

Another potential need for the city to consider is the age appropriateness of the two sets. During the public involvement process for this plan, respondents indicated that the 2-5 playground is actually too small for children in the 3-6 age range, but the 5-12 playground equipment is too big. In order to accommodate growing children that are transitioning between these size groups, the city may consider a third playground area that is size-appropriate for these children.

Jack Dickert Memorial Pond



Dickert's Pond
Image Source: East Ridge Parks & Recreation

Dickert's Pond is a 2-acre manmade lake located near Camp Jordan Arena. The pond is popular for fishing and is intended to be a catch-and-release facility. TWRA stocks the pond with catfish annually; other species such as bass, crappie, and brim may also be found. Dickert's Pond is sometimes used for special fishing events including the Optimist Club Fishing Rodeo each June. A number of bird species can be found in and around the pond.

Maintenance and Needs

The pond is in need of an aeration system in order to increase oxygen levels and reduce algae accumulation. The pond has also been considered as the location for a nature pier and observation deck, provided that adequate space is available.

Pavilions



New Pavilion at Camp Jordan
Image Source: East Ridge Parks & Recreation

Camp Jordan has a number of covered pavilions throughout the park. The East Picnic Pavilion features a full kitchen is fully ADA accessible from the parking lot. Another, new pavilion is the one funded by the Jordan Crossing development located near the RV parking area. The pavilions are great for picnics, social gatherings, and other functions, and are popular and utilized by numerous community groups throughout the year.

Maintenance and Needs

Some of the pavilions are older and have been battered by the weather over the years. These could use some general upgrades including new roofs. In addition, some are located far from restroom facilities, which is inconvenient for users, especially for those with mobility challenges. Finally, some pavilions are inaccessible for persons with disabilities. To make the park more handicap-friendly, reserved parking spaces, hard-surface paths, and wheelchair-accessible tables are needed.

Camp Jordan Disc Golf Course



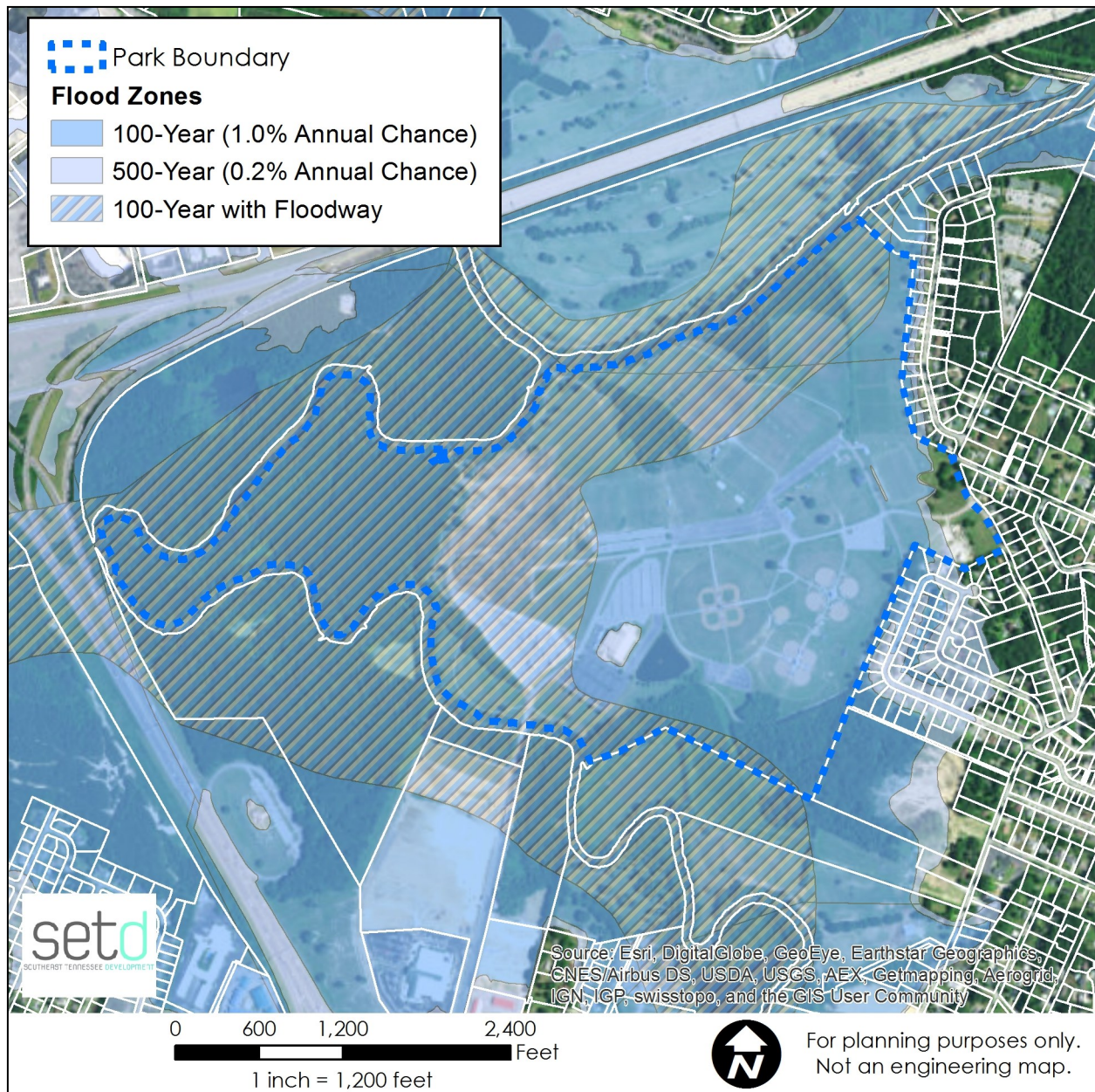
Disc Golf at Camp Jordan
Image Source: Chattanooga Times-Free Press

In 2012, with the help of volunteers and the Chattanooga Flying Disc Club, the first phase of Camp Jordan's disc golf course opened to the public. The 19-hole course is the largest in the Chattanooga area and has qualities that make it unique from other courses in the area, in particular its open holes which allow for long throws. Holes located in wooded areas offer significant technical challenges which require experience and expertise. The disc golf course is extremely popular and attracts visitors from throughout the tri-state region.

Maintenance and Needs

Year-round use by avid players keep branches and undergrowth at bay in wooded areas, while the city ensures fields are accessible and well-maintained. Staff did not identify any major improvements that would be necessary within the next 5 years.

Development Constraints



Flooding is the most significant hindrance to development at Camp Jordan Park. Practically the entire park is located within the 100-year floodplain, and significant portions are located within the floodway where structures are subject to extreme hydrostatic pressures. The city's floodplain development ordinance discourages development within floodways and places strict requirements on all floodplain structures.

Engineering certifications are often required when placing fill material or to ensure structures meet basic minimum standards. Developing in floodplains presents risk and adds significant costs to any project.

Public Input & Observations

Citizens and park users submitted a number of comments about Camp Jordan during the public involvement process of this recreation plan. Common themes from this feedback are summarized below; full results may be found in the Community Involvement chapter.

Suggestions for SAFETY improvements:

- Improved traffic control and access entering/leaving Camp Jordan Park
- Better lighting in dark areas
- Emergency call boxes
- Stricter enforcement of leash requirements for dogs
- Surveillance, police patrols on bikes, park ranger

Suggestions for FACILITY improvements:

- Improvements to the baseball/softball fields
- Restroom improvements; restrooms are often locked
- Improved parking, especially around baseball fields
- Additional playground equipment; inadequate facilities for 3-6 year-olds
- Landscaping, flowers, and aesthetic improvements

Suggestions for PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS:

- Sports leagues throughout year for different age groups, especially basketball
- More community-oriented programming such as movies in the park, concerts with local bands, 5K races, and family events
- Equipment check-out & rentals (game balls, canoes)
- Non-event guests are charged for parking or cannot use facilities during events

Participants at the public involvement workshop on April 1, 2017

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development



Recommendations for Camp Jordan Park

Recommendations are presented in this plan as a means of identifying priorities based on assessments completed by the authors, input from city officials, and comments received during the public involvement process. These may be used to identify funding opportunities and align municipal projects with identified recreation needs. The following recommendations are presented for Camp Jordan Park:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

1. Continue to pursue the improvement and funding package for Camp Jordan Park, which includes necessary facility upgrades that will improve user experience and facilitate economic growth.
2. Have a survey completed for Camp Jordan property so that the city has an accurate inventory of floodplain limits, utilities, and legal boundaries.
3. Introduce/expand programs and events intended for East Ridge residents and families.
4. Add signage and maps to help visitors navigate the park.
5. Add bike patrols or park rangers to ensure enforcement of city ordinances and improve safety throughout the park.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Explore projects that would reduce the flood risk in areas with significant use and public investment.
2. Establish sports leagues and provide special programming for retiring baby boomers.
3. Implement a program to improve ADA accessibility at existing facilities.
4. Consider adding additional facilities including, but not limited to, the following: tennis courts, basketball courts, pickleball courts, short walking track, small & large dog park, canoe launch.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS

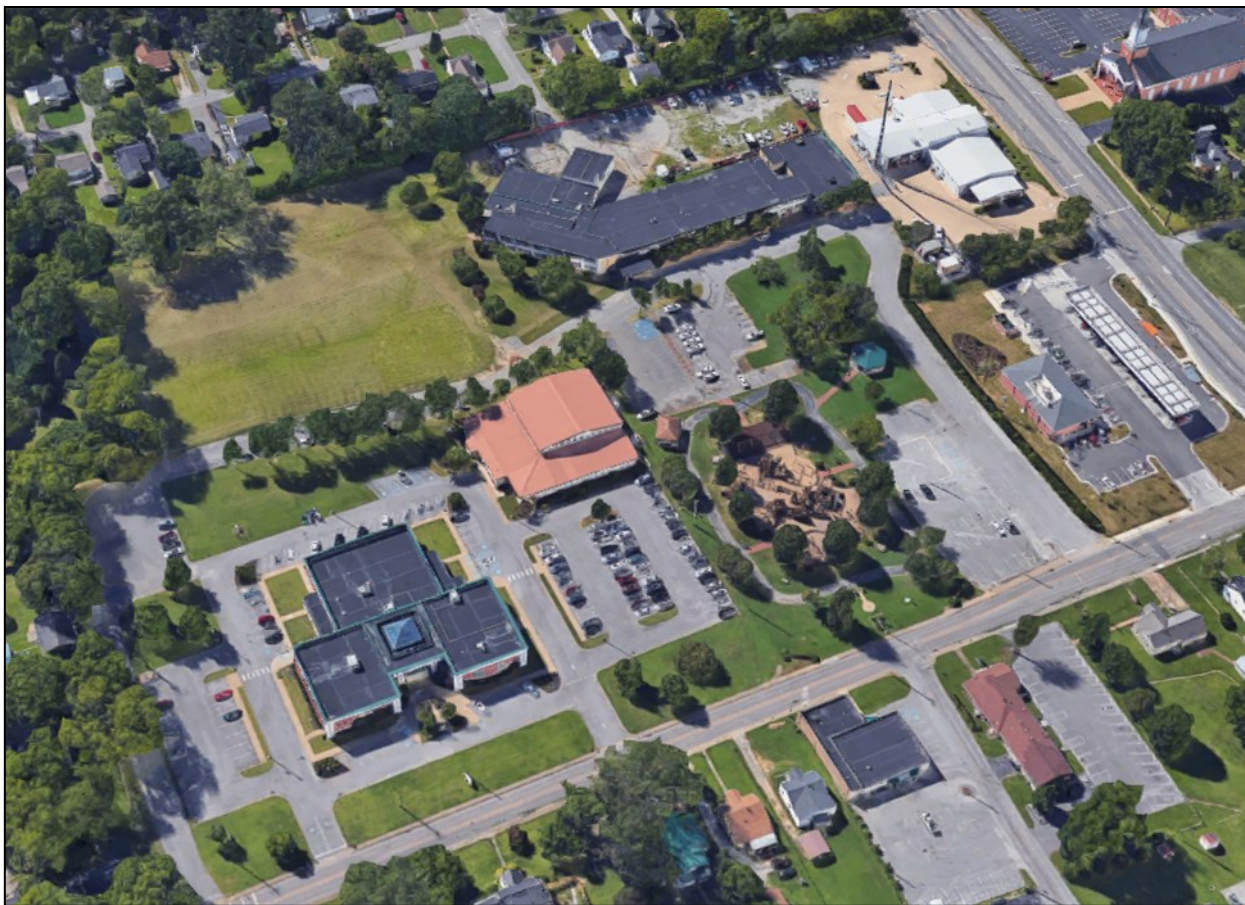
1. Begin implementing the Camp Jordan Improvements Plan, especially with regards to parking improvements and ballfield upgrades.
2. Install safety improvements including lighting and emergency call boxes around the park and walking track.
3. Construct climate-controlled restrooms adequate for large tournaments and park events.
4. Complete the Exit 1 intersection improvements at Camp Jordan Parkway and Ringgold Road.
5. Develop an equipment check-out and rental program.
6. Add signage and trail markers for the nature trails and paddling areas.



East Ridge Municipal Complex







East Ridge Municipal Complex | Image Source: Google Maps

OVERVIEW

The East Ridge Municipal Complex features many facilities including city hall, the public library, senior and community center, police station, McBrien school building, Pioneer Frontier Playground, and Curtis Adams Pavilion. Located off Tombras Avenue and Ringgold Road, the property is centrally located in the City of East Ridge. The total complex is approximately 14.4 acres and includes a 2.0-acre field that may be dedicated for recreational use.

Determining the highest and best use of this property is essential since there is little available public land in East Ridge. Because the property is easily accessible and situated near the center of the city, this plan has identified the municipal complex as a priority location for recreational development.

Adjacent parcels include a mix of residential, civic, and commercial uses. The existing public use of these properties means recreational

development would not significantly alter neighborhood dynamics. In fact, recreational amenities that are accessible and convenient will help attract young families to East Ridge and boost revitalization efforts.

Master Plan in Process

The city council recently approved a master plan to be developed for the various properties around the municipal complex. The study seeks to determine the highest and best use of these properties as the city considers consolidating certain operations to a single, centralized location. The recommendations from the master planning process may impact the eventual size, location, and intensity of the facilities in this recreation plan. It is anticipated that the proposals in this document will be referenced and incorporated into the master plan for the municipal complex, given the significant public involvement and time invested in developing these recreation goals and recommendations.

Existing Facilities

Pioneer Frontier Playground



Pioneer Frontier Playground

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Pioneer Frontier is a playground that was funded and constructed by East Ridge citizens and community volunteers. Located next to city hall, the wooden playground has been used extensively since it was constructed in the early 1990s.

The equipment consists of several attached and detached play structures intended for use by children ages 2-12. A fenced play area with a swing set and small climber provide a separate space for younger children. The main playground features various climbers, slides, overhead bars, ramps, swings, and a tire swing.

Surrounding the playground are picnic tables, and benches which are frequently used by children, their parents, and grandparents. Restrooms are also located nearby. A paved walking track approximately one-eighth of a mile surrounds the play equipment.



Toddler Swing Set

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development



Pioneer Frontier Walking Track

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Maintenance and Needs

Unfortunately, discussions about Pioneer Frontier usually turn to its age, safety concerns, and need for repairs. Nearly 25 years' worth of hot, humid summers and freezing winters have weathered the wooden structures significantly. In addition, the playground has been climbed on and trampled by many thousands of children over the years. Wooden playgrounds are no longer standard in the industry. The playground, while still very popular, is showing its age.

Parents have raised concerns including visibility and child safety. The layout and bulk of the structures make it difficult to see the entire playground; parents cannot observe their children at all times. During site visits, SETD staff observed discarded food and beverage containers in these areas with an obstructed view, an indication that some users are spending considerable time in these concealed areas. Parents have also voiced concern over unsupervised teenagers at the playground. Even though the police station is nearby, the volume of public survey responses about unsupervised teens and general playground safety suggests some additional efforts

to address these problems, whether real or perceived, may be warranted.

Previous talks about replacing or updating the equipment at Pioneer Frontier have been met with resistance. Because citizens and community groups helped fund and build the playground, and because it truly is an asset for the East Ridge community, some individuals have been hesitant to remove or upgrade the playground components. However, the condition of the playground is creating safety hazards for children: boards are splintering, structural elements are becoming disconnected, and some components do not meet today's playground safety codes.

Many parents hesitate to let their children play here due to these safety hazards. Eventually, conditions will deteriorate to the point where the city has no choice but to close the playground to the public. To avoid this end, the equipment at Pioneer Frontier will need to be replaced in the coming years, and the entire facility brought up to code. During this transition, It may be beneficial for the city to convene a special committee or task force to determine appropriate means of commemorating the original Pioneer Frontier playground and those groups and individuals who made it possible.



[Collapsed Walkway at Pioneer Frontier](#)
[Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development](#)

Curtis Adams Pavilion



Curtis Adams Pavilion

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Located immediately adjacent to Pioneer Frontier playground is the Curtis Adams Pavilion. The pavilion is accessed via a brick walkway and features a paved concrete pad covered with a metal-roof shelter. Two picnic tables are located here, making the pavilion a suitable area for small gatherings and picnics.

Maintenance and Needs

ADA accessibility to the pavilion could be improved; currently, persons in wheelchairs must cross grass and use the walking track to access the brick walkway leading to the pavilion. Otherwise, the pavilion is in good condition and does not appear to require any repairs other than general maintenance over the planning horizon.

Community and Senior Center



Community & Senior Center

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

The East Ridge Community Center, which also houses the senior center, is adjacent to city hall and Pioneer Frontier playground. The building includes the senior room, the Orange Room, and gym. The community center is used for a variety of workout classes, special programs, and public meetings.

Some of the programs are provided at no cost, while some require a fee. Memberships to the community and senior center are also available. Pricing for the various memberships and activities are listed on the Parks and Recreation website. Different prices are listed for different types of activities involving facilities rental; it may be worthwhile to review these fee schedules and implement a flat rate. In addition, the hours listed on the city website are different from the sign posted in front of the community center. These should be updated to reflect the actual hours of operation.

Maintenance and Needs

The community center building appears to be well-maintained. However, the basketball court in the gym does not meet regulation size. Consequently, there are no public full-size

basketball courts anywhere in East Ridge. The city may consider constructing new courts that are able to support league play.

The public input process revealed a desire to provide more activities for teens and youth. When kids are released from school, they often congregate at the community center. Additional programming at the center could help at-risk youth from engaging in illicit activities, and improve their opportunities for academic and career success.

As more baby boomers retire, and current seniors enter their 70s, 80s, and above, the city may find its current senior center requires additional space and programming. A thriving senior center is an excellent way to ensure members are living healthy and active lives, that their needs are being met, and that they are able to age in place in East Ridge.

City staff has indicated that additional workout and/or meeting rooms are needed. Popular classes include karate, pilates, and yoga. One potential location for these is McBrien Elementary. The batting cages are currently at McBrien. As the city conducts its master plan for the entire municipal complex property, it may



Community Center Senior Room

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

consider including one or more rooms to accommodate recreation activities inside the McBrien building.

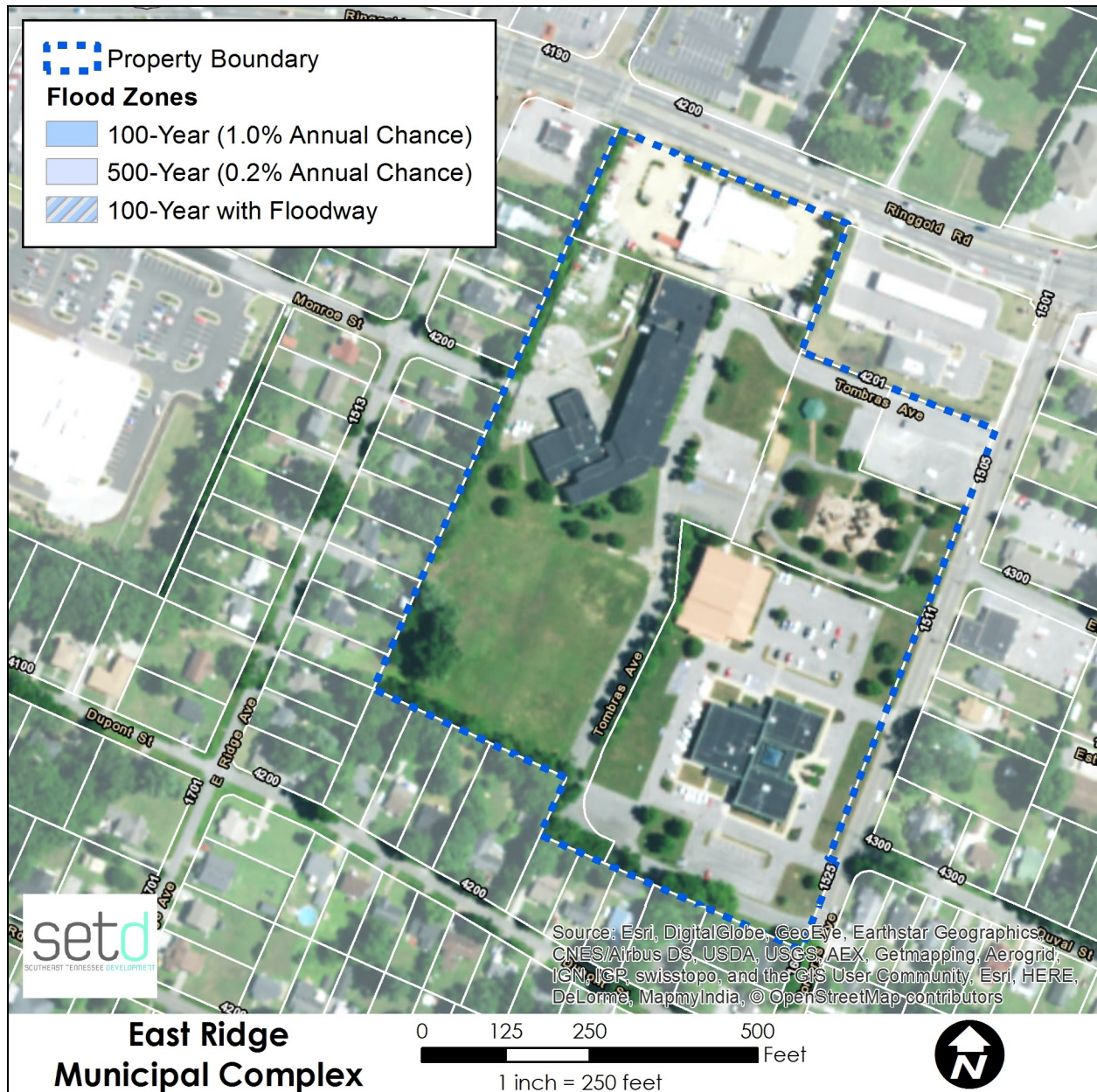
Finally, the hours on either the website or the sign need to be updated to reflect the actual hours of operation. The city may also consider a simplified fee structure for facility and equipment rentals.



Community Center Basketball Court

Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Development Constraints



The municipal complex property is located entirely outside any identified flood hazard area, which makes it ideal for recreation development. Developing in floodplains carries significant risks, as any alteration or impedance of natural water flows can affect flood patterns in other parts of a community. East Ridge has large residential, commercial, and recreation areas located within floodplains. Minimizing additional floodplain alterations should be a priority for the city.

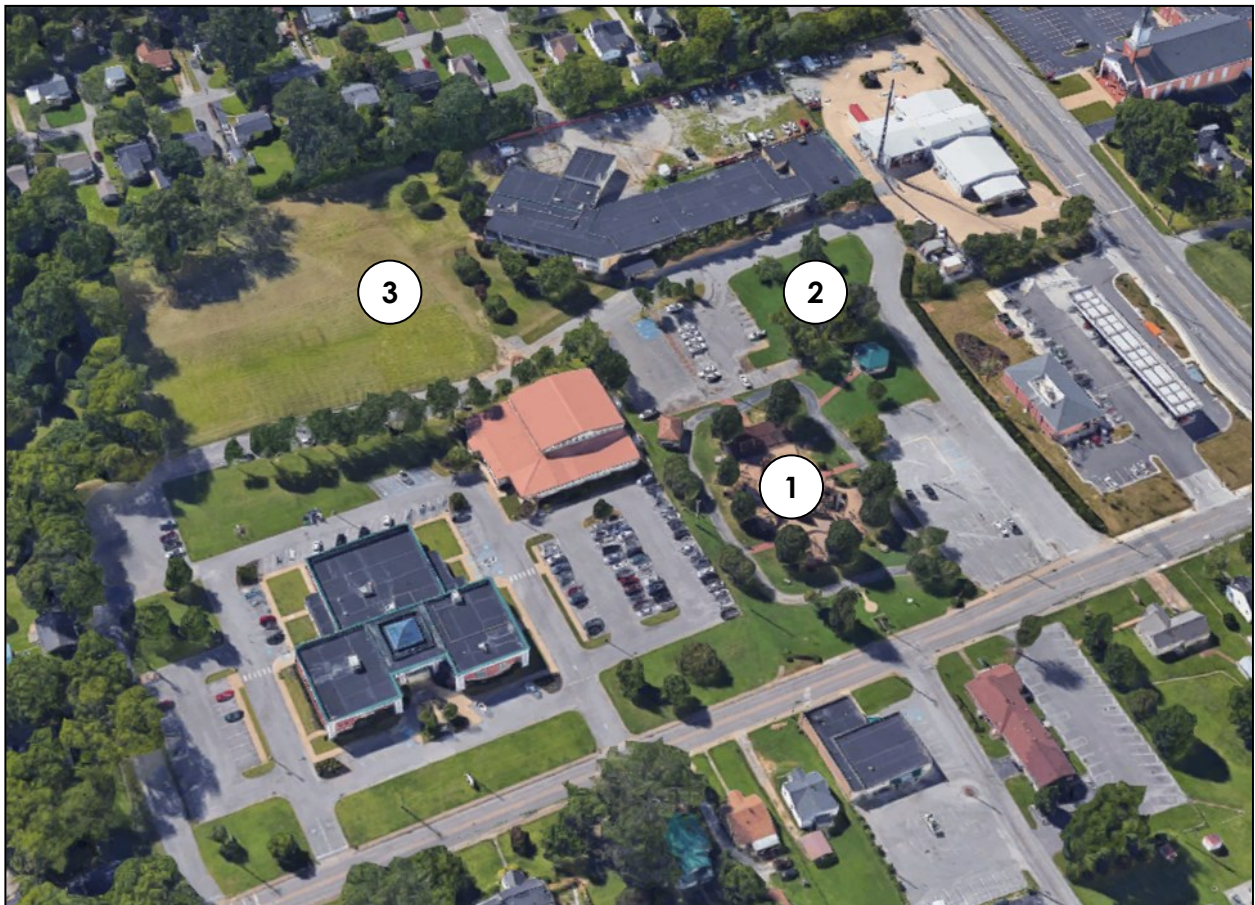
Recent discussions about consolidating

municipal operations at the complex mean recreation needs will be weighed against other facility needs of the city. It is possible that some operations, such as animal control or the police department, could ultimately utilize parts of the McBrien Elementary building. Other areas of McBrien may be used for meeting rooms, or even workout spaces. Planning efforts are underway to develop an overall master plan for the municipal complex property, which may impact recreation proposals identified in this plan.

Potential Future Recreation Development

One of the biggest challenges to developing recreation opportunities in the central and western portions of the East Ridge is the limited available publicly owned land. As mentioned previously, the use of this property must be carefully considered and evaluated for its highest and best use. At the time this plan was written, the city was moving forward with having a consultant complete a master plan for the property around the municipal complex. This master plan should integrate the recommendations from this recreation plan in order to improve the recreation offerings for East Ridge citizens.

The projects which follow are proposed around the municipal complex. These have been recommended based on public input results and also reflect the vision of elected officials and city staff. In addition, these proposals attempt to meet needs and provide new recreation opportunities for residents in the western and central portions of East Ridge. These amenities will bring energy and build community, which will help attract young families and encourage investment in East Ridge.



PROPOSED RECREATION AMENITIES

1. New Pioneer Frontier Playground
2. Splash Pad
3. Multi-use Outdoor Pavilion

Details of proposed amenities are provided on the following pages.

1. New Pioneer Frontier Playground



Imagination Station, Collegedale | Image Source: GameTime Flickr

While Pioneer Frontier has served the children of East Ridge well for 25 years, its condition has deteriorated to the point where a new playground is needed. Maintenance, safety, and the age of Pioneer Frontier constituted the majority of complaints in the public input results. Respondents pointed to Imagination Station in Collegedale as a desirable playground—and, given the similar history of Imagination Station and Pioneer Frontier, East Ridge may look to the process Collegedale followed in order to build community support and deliver a unique and meaningful playground to the community.

As of the writing of this plan, Parks and Recreation Staff were reaching out to playground companies about community involvement strategies for replacing a beloved asset like Pioneer Frontier. The new playground should include equipment for children at all stages of development and address the concerns parents had about the existing structure and layout. In addition, the playground may integrate one or

more components of the original playground or include another appropriate way to commemorate the original Pioneer Frontier playground and the members of the community who made it possible.

Preliminary estimates based on similar projects place the cost for this project in the \$100,000 to \$150,000 range, but this may vary based on final design, materials, playground area, and other factors. The Local Parks and Recreation Fund grant program, available through TDEC's Recreation Education Services division, is a potential funding source for this project.

2. Splash Pad



Rotary Splash Pad, Morristown | Image Source: City of Morristown, TN

The second proposed project at the municipal complex is a splash pad. Splash pads have several advantages over pools for local governments: they cost less to build and operate; they do not require lifeguards; they present less risk to municipalities and insurance providers; and they are easily accessible for persons with disabilities. Another advantage is that splash pads can be operated on a day-to-day basis, whereas pools have defined seasons when they are open. For these reasons, many communities in Tennessee have opted for splash pads in recent years. With limitless design and play options, a splash pad would fit in well at the East Ridge municipal complex and could even incorporate design features from the new Pioneer Frontier playground.

A splash pad could be funded through the Local Parks and Recreation Fund grant program. The grant would enable the city to contract with an engineer who would work with East Ridge to determine the size, layout, and design of the splash pad. The ultimate design could even incorporate elements of the new Pioneer Frontier playground, providing for a unified aesthetic and play experience at the newly proposed East Ridge Town Center.



The design and function of splash pads varies widely by setting and location. This splash pad in Cookeville, TN also serves as a monument and fountain in one of its city parks. At night, LED lights provide an ever-changing visual display that delights park visitors. As East Ridge contemplates its own splash pad, it should determine what the community would like to see and construct a splash pad that creates an exciting play area for children, while also serving to aesthetically enhance the municipal complex.

3. Multiuse Outdoor Pavilion



Covered Sports Pavilion | Image Source: Camp Southern Ground, Fayetteville, GA

The third project proposed at the municipal complex is a multiuse covered pavilion. The pavilion would be located on the open field behind McBrien and include one or more full-size basketball courts as well as an optional stage, restrooms, and concession booths. The pavilion could be used for a variety of activities, but would be primarily reserved year-round for basketball and other recreation uses. However, the pavilion would also be available for outdoor community events such as graduations, outdoor movies, youth activities, and other such programs. Building such a multi-use facility at the municipal complex would help bring programming and civic events to a location accessible by the entire community.

Funding for such a pavilion could come from a variety of sources, including the Local Parks and Recreation Fund grant program. However, LPRF funds could potentially restrict other uses at the pavilion, since LPRF-funded projects are reserved exclusively for public recreation use. Other potential sources include farmers market grant programs, or even private foundations. The cost will depend on amenities and the use of aesthetically pleasing materials and design.

Another suggestion is to install a quarter-mile paved or gravel walking track around the pavilion and field where it is located; the current track

around Pioneer Frontier is too small. Finally, some green space and open fields near the pavilion should also be retained to support other activities and recreation programs.



A covered pavilion could also be used to host local farmers markets. The Chattanooga Market, pictured here, takes place such an open-air pavilion each Sunday during the summer. This pavilion is also used for UTC tailgating events, arts shows, and even fan viewing parties during the Chattanooga Futbol Club's away games. East Ridge could benefit from a variety of programs and events from a large outdoor pavilion.

Public Input & Observations

Citizens and park users submitted a number of comments about recreation facilities at the municipal complex during the public involvement process of this recreation plan. Common themes from this feedback are summarized below; full results may be found in the Community Involvement chapter.

Suggestions for SAFETY improvements:

- Replace Pioneer Frontier playground with new equipment that meets today's safety codes and which allows for full visibility throughout the play area
- Address safety and/or security risks posed by unsupervised youth at the playground
- Coordinate with recreation staff or police (station located nearby) to enforce existing Pioneer Frontier Playground Rules



Enforcement of existing playground rules would address many of the safety concerns raised by citizens in the public input surveys.

Suggestions for FACILITY improvements:

- Replace playground equipment at Pioneer Frontier
- Add a splash pad and associated amenities (changing rooms, upgraded restrooms, covered or shaded seating areas, etc.)
- Construct a multiuse covered outdoor pavilion that provides flex-space for a variety of recreation programming and community events
- Construct at least one full-size basketball court, which could potentially be integrated into the covered outdoor pavilion
- Consider adding a walking track around the pavilion.
- Retain green space or an open field around the pavilion.

Suggestions for PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS:

- Market existing programs at senior center and explore opportunities for new activities
- Provide organized or supervised activities for youth and teenagers
- Establish a farmers market at the new covered pavilion
- Introduce programs at the pavilion such as outdoor concerts, movies, and other activities
- Provide alternative programming intended for East Ridge residents at the municipal complex when Camp Jordan has tournaments and other restricted-access events.

Recommendations for Municipal Complex

Recommendations are presented in this plan as a means of identifying priorities based on assessments completed by the authors, input from city officials, and comments received during the public involvement process. These may be used to identify funding opportunities and align municipal projects with identified recreation needs. The following recommendations are presented for the municipal complex:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

1. Coordinate with staff and potentially East Ridge police to enforce existing rules at Pioneer Frontier playground.
2. Begin the master planning process for the municipal complex property.
3. The city council should begin planning and budgeting for the replacement of playground equipment at Pioneer Frontier playground.
4. Convene a citizen's advisory committee or stakeholder group to ensure the Pioneer Frontier replacement project has the trust and support of the East Ridge community.
5. Review facility hours and rental fees, and ensure continuity between signage and information posted on city websites.

4. Evaluate senior center programs and activities to ensure it is meeting the needs of the growing number of baby boomer retirees.
5. Include workout rooms for exercise classes in the McBrien building.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Evaluate the results of the new amenities and determine additional opportunities for recreation facilities and programs.
2. Consider adding outdoor ADA-accessible exercise equipment that can be utilized by adults and seniors.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS

1. Reconstruct Pioneer Frontier playground.
2. Construct a splash pad.
3. Construct a covered multi-use pavilion and organize recreation and community programs utilizing the pavilion year-round.



Springvale Park





Existing Facilities



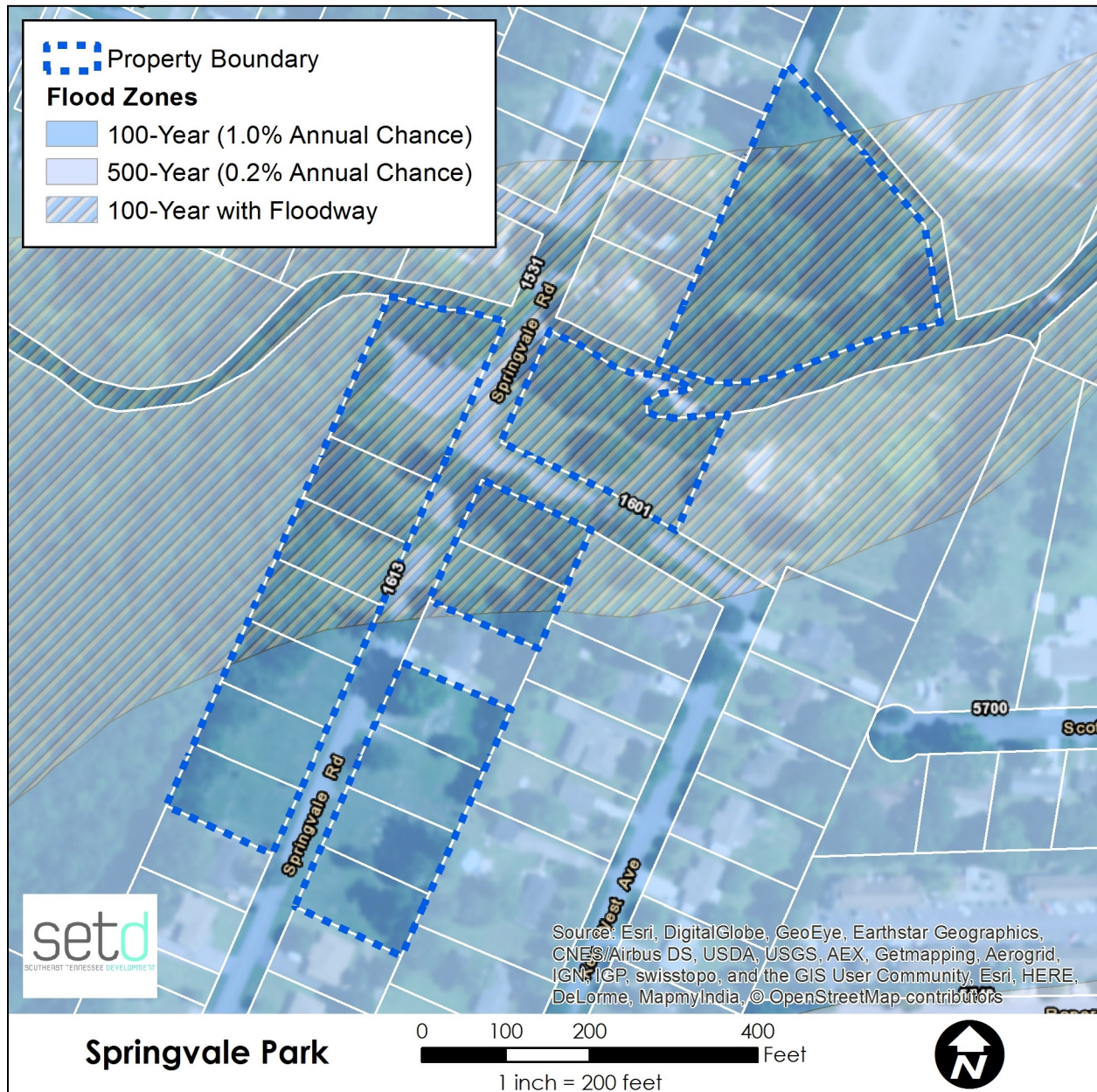
Springvale Park | Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Located on Springvale Avenue near the Georgia state line, Springvale Park consists of a collection of vacant lots that were acquired by the city to remove damaged structures and relocate residents outside the floodplain. The area most immediately identifiable as Springvale Park, pictured above, is located on the west side of Springvale Avenue and includes a sign and small parking area. However, the city actually owns a 15 parcels totaling approximately 6 acres. Because these properties are publicly owned—and because they are located within a floodway, making them unsuitable for other development—Springvale Park is ideal for low-intensity recreational development.

The surrounding properties include a mix of wooded and residential lots. Only a single house is still located across from Springvale Park; otherwise, the city owns most of the property on this block.

Spring Creek flows through the property. As discussed earlier in this plan, Spring Creek is listed on the state's 303(d) list of impaired water bodies. Spring Creek eventually flows into West Chickamauga Creek at Camp Jordan Park. Any development that happens at Springvale Park should be sensitive to the existing pollution in Spring Creek and maintain adequate vegetative buffers.

Development Constraints



The city originally acquired the properties along Springvale Road to eliminate homes that had been damaged by repeat flood events over the years. Any new construction on these properties should take the flood risk into consideration. The city has a responsibility to ensure anything it builds complies with its floodplain development regulations.

The other constraint is that Springvale Park is located in a residential neighborhood. Future recreation development here should be careful to generate modest noise and traffic as to not upend the residential neighborhoods surrounding the park.

Potential Future Recreation Development

Given the development constraints and consideration for the surrounding residential neighborhoods, Springvale Park is recommended

for a series of dog parks, with the potential for a small playground and covered pavilion.



Dog Park | Image Source: City of Concord, NC

Springvale Park should be able to support several separate enclosed areas. At least three are recommended: one for small dogs, one for large dogs, and one empty area. These three are rotated to allow time for grass to regrow and replenish in the vacant area.

In terms of amenities, the city can include only basic options such as a water fountain with a few picnic tables, or it can include play equipment for dogs. Many dog parks include pavilions or other structures to provide shade; however, Springvale Park has several large trees, so there may not be a need to install additional shade structures.

It will be important to have dog park rules displayed in a prominent location. The city may want to consider breed or size limitations in the different dog park areas. City staff will also need to monitor ground cover to ensure all of the grass is not worn away, as well as after major rainstorms to ensure this flood-prone area is not excessively

muddy or inundated with water. It will be important to ensure owners “pick up” after their pets in order to prevent animal waste from flowing into Spring Creek.

ADA accessibility should be incorporated into the design for Springvale Park. This includes accessible parking spaces, paths, amenities, and equipment. If anything is constructed on the east side of Springvale Avenue, separate parking areas or an ADA-compliant crosswalk should be installed.



www.theparkcatalog.com

Public Input & Observations

Citizens and park users submitted comments about Springvale Park during the public involvement process of this recreation plan. Common themes from this feedback are summarized below; full results may be found in the Community Involvement chapter.

Suggestions for SAFETY improvements:

- One respondent asked for increased police patrols due to potential suspicious activity in the parking lot.

Suggestions for FACILITY improvements:

- Do something to better utilize this property.
- Residents and city leaders have expressed a desire for a dog park in East Ridge.

Suggestions for PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS:

- It has been suggested that a dog park could be funded through grants, donations, or even special fundraisers.
- If a dog park is constructed, the city could host special “Bark at the Park” events or even special animal adoption days.

Recommendations for Springvale Park

Recommendations are presented in this plan as a means of identifying priorities based on assessments completed by the authors, input from city officials, and comments received during the public involvement process. These may be used to identify funding opportunities and align municipal projects with identified recreation needs. The following recommendations are presented for Springvale Park:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

1. Obtain approval from the city council to proceed with constructing a dog park at Springvale Park.
2. Determine if other amenities (pavilion, gazebo, or even a playground) are desired at this location.
3. Explore funding opportunities for desired amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS

1. Construct a dog park with design that preserves ground cover, protects tree health, and which keeps waste out of Spring Creek.
2. Improve park signage and parking lot.

3. Consider hosting special events for dog owners as well as the East Ridge animal shelter.

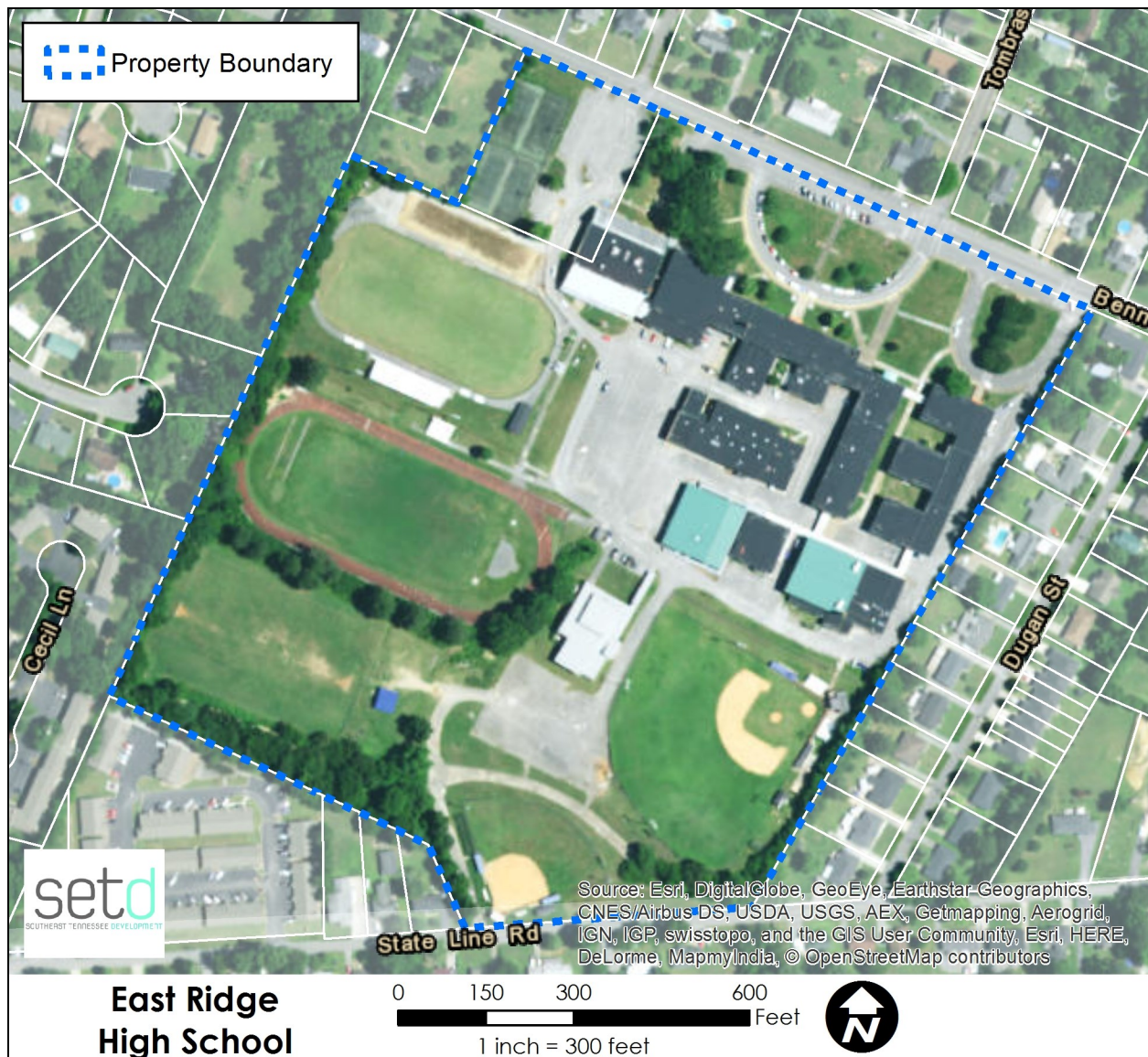
LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Evaluate the results of the new amenities and determine additional opportunities for recreation facilities and programs.
2. Monitor condition of park amenities and replace as may be required.
3. Consider developing other amenities to make this a true neighborhood park for the surrounding residential areas.



East Ridge High School





OVERVIEW

East Ridge High School—home of the Pioneers—is located off Bennett Road in the central, southern part of the city. The school is located in a residential area featuring a mix of single-family and multi-family housing. Between the educational and recreational facilities, the site and covers approximately 34 acres.

Recreational facilities at the athletic complex include an indoor gymnasium with basketball court, tennis courts, football stadium, track & field facilities, soccer field, softball field, and baseball field. These facilities are used primarily for student athletics. However, the community is able to utilize some facilities after school hours.

In 2017, the City of East Ridge obtained ownership of the outdoor athletic facilities from the Hamilton County School Board. In previous years, inadequate maintenance of resulted in numerous problems, including the concrete stands at the football stadium being condemned as “structurally unsafe” in 2015. Since taking over the facilities, the city has made significant investments to make them suitable for student and community use. While additional work is needed to bring all of the facilities back into good condition, the improvements have allowed student athletes to participate in school sports leagues and for East Ridge citizens to exercise after hours. With additional investment, the school’s athletic facilities will be some of the best in Hamilton County.

Existing Facilities

Raymond James Stadium/Shanks Field



Football Stadium at East Ridge High School
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

With new stands and a well-maintained field, the football stadium is again able to support home football games for the East Ridge Pioneers. The new metal bleacher stands are ADA-accessible and can support several hundred student, parents, and fans on both the home and visitor's sides. The newly planted field is also in better shape now that it is being managed by the City of East Ridge.

Maintenance and Needs

City staff have indicated that, within the next 5 years, the concessions and restrooms inside the stadium need to be upgraded. LPRF funds cannot be used for school athletic facilities, so funds for these improvements must come from the city or another source.

Baseball & Softball Fields

The athletic complex includes one baseball and one softball field. The baseball field features a grass infield, and both have lighting to accommodate evening games. Batting cages are also located at each facility. Games are played here throughout the regular high school baseball and softball season.

Maintenance and Needs

As with the football field, the condition of the grounds at the baseball and softball fields has improved since being managed by the City of East Ridge. Eventually, the dugouts will require some improvements, and areas of fencing will need to be replaced.

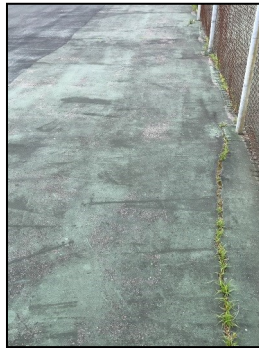


Baseball Stadium at East Ridge High School
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Tennis Courts



High School Tennis Courts
Image Source: Southeast
Tennessee Development



Four tennis courts are located at the school. They are enclosed with fencing and have lighting. The courts are used for Pioneer tennis practice and matches, and sometimes by the community after school hours.

Maintenance and Needs

The tennis courts are in urgent need of resurfacing. Vegetation is also growing over and through the fence. New fencing, net posts, benches, and signage are also needed. Staff has discussed approaching the U.S. Tennis Association to assist with funding these improvements. Other than these four courts at the high school, there are no public tennis courts in East Ridge. Tennis is a popular sport, but currently, many East Ridge residents go to other communities to play. Improving these courts would benefit not only Pioneer Athletics, but the East Ridge community as a whole.

Track & Field Facilities



ERHS Track & Field Facilities
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

The track & field facilities at East Ridge High School include a 400m track, throwing square, viewing stands, and football field goal. The facility is used for physical education classes, men's and women's track, and football practice. Members of the community sometimes also utilize the track for walking and running after hours. Portions of the track are lighted for evening use.

Maintenance and Needs

The current track surface is outdated, damaged, and substandard compared to many other regional facilities. It should be resurfaced. Portions of the track have overhanging trees, which should be trimmed. Other potential improvements include new fencing, a new field goal post, and new lighting. Since the track is intended for use by the public, signage with various workout routines may promote use and physical activity.

Soccer, Band, and ROTC Field



Football Stadium at East Ridge High School
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

The third field at the athletic complex is a multipurpose field used for a variety of activities including ROTC, marching band practice, and soccer. The soccer teams use this field for practice, but typically use the football stadium or Camp Jordan for games and tournaments.

Maintenance and Needs

This field meets current needs, given the variety of activities for which it is used. New equipment for specific functions may be needed, but no specific facility improvements are identified within the planning horizon.

Grounds and Parking Facilities



ERHS Parking Lot and Field House
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

When the city acquired the athletic facilities in the Summer of 2017, it also assumed ownership and responsibility for the parking lots, grounds, and other non-academic buildings from Hamilton County Board of Education. Maintenance and improvement of these other facilities is now also the responsibility of East Ridge.

Maintenance and Needs

Many of the parking areas and driveways are in poor condition. Drainage problems and many years of wear-and-tear have resulted in damage to asphalt, curbs, drainage facilities, and buildings. While some of these may not be an immediate priority for improvement, they nevertheless do require repairs and repaving. In addition, many of the buildings and facilities have been the subject of vandalism, such as the graffiti on the soccer field equipment building. The city is responsible for cleaning these facilities and for ongoing security. Improving the grounds and facilities will not only improve their aesthetics and use, but elevate the spirit of Pioneer student athletes and their potential for long-term academic success.

Development Constraints

As an active school site, the athletic complex is intended primarily for use by school sports teams and classes. East Ridge residents may be able to use the facility during certain parts of the year when school is not in session, or after hours. Since the athletic fields have been taken over by the City of East Ridge, the intent would be to make the facilities available to all within the community. An agreement with school officials and clearly defined rules should avoid any problems with general community use outside of school hours.

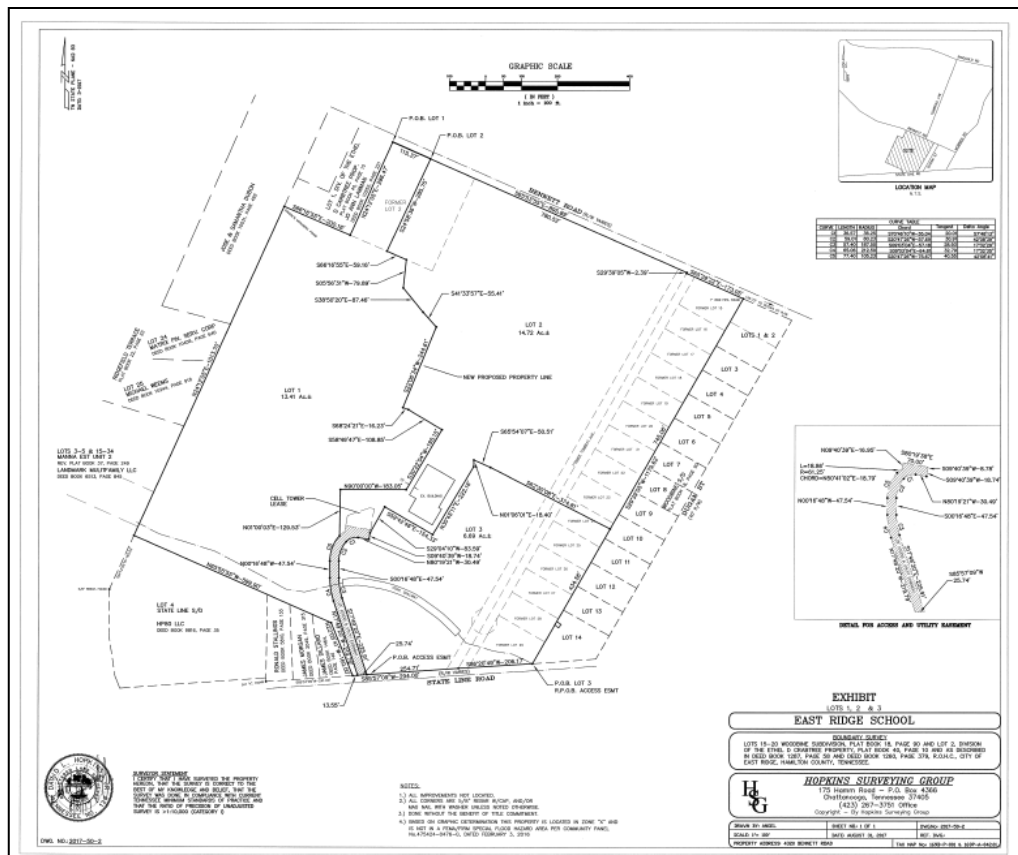
The high school property is located outside any identified flood hazard area, although a dry-weather inspection suggested problems with drainage in areas of the property, especially some of the parking areas and athletic fields. The city may consider improving drainage in these areas in order to protect its investments and the integrity of playing surfaces.

The deed of transfer between the school board and the city states that the athletic

complex is conveyed to the city “for such time as [HCBE] operates East Ridge High School... at [its] present location[], and for no longer.” In addition, the school board reserves the right to expand or relocate academic buildings on the athletic complex property, with the condition that replacement facilities be provided elsewhere. While this should not deter East Ridge from making investments to improve the recreation facilities, it has possibility of becoming an issue in the future.

Finally, the restricted use of the athletic facilities by an educational institution makes them ineligible for funding under the state's LPRF grant program. Moreover, the deed of transfer bars the city from encumbering the property in any way. LPRF's deed restriction requirement—that property improved with LPRF funds be dedicated to public recreational use in perpetuity—further makes it ineligible for LPRF funding. Other funding sources are required in order to improve the facilities at the high school athletic complex.

Athletic facilities
on Lots 1 & 3 were
conveyed to East
Ridge.
Image Source:
City of East Ridge



Public Input & Observations

Although the school facilities were acquired after the public input phase of this recreation plan, some of the responses are applicable to the athletic complex. Other needs were identified by city staff, local elected officials, concerned parents, and members of the East Ridge community.

Suggestions for SAFETY improvements:

- Conduct essential repairs and maintenance to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, athletes, and East Ridge citizens.

Suggestions for FACILITY improvements:

- Improve facilities to standard equal to or exceeding other high schools in the region.
- If the city intends to promote the facilities for community use, rules should be clearly posted.

Suggestions for PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS:

- Continue to promote and support student athletic events and competitions.
- Identify opportunities to intergenerational engagement through special activities and events.

Recommendations for High School Athletic Complex

Recommendations are presented in this plan as a means of identifying priorities based on assessments completed by the authors, input from city officials, and comments received during the public involvement process. These may be used to identify funding opportunities and align municipal projects with identified recreation needs. The following recommendations are presented for the East Ridge High School Athletic Complex:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

1. Develop an improvement schedule for the next 5 years, with a priority on student safety.
2. Identify potential funding sources, excluding the Local Park & Recreation fund due to its public access and deed restriction requirements.
3. Establish rules and policies for use of athletic complex facilities by community residents, and install signage to clearly display these rules.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT 3-5 YEARS

1. Resurface and install other upgrades at the tennis courts.
2. Resurface the track.
3. Repave complex parking lots and interior drives.

4. Replace fencing and lighting at identified areas.
5. Upgrade restrooms, concessions, and other auxiliary buildings throughout the athletic complex.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop recreation programs that promote intergenerational engagement and social interaction.
2. Integrate funding for recreation facilities and programming into annual municipal budget.
3. Evaluate facilities to ensure the athletic complex is meeting the needs of students, athletic teams, coaches, and the community as a whole.



Community Involvement



OVERVIEW

From the beginning, city leaders and the project team emphasized the importance of public involvement and community engagement in the planning process. In order for any plan to reflect the wants and needs of the community, it must be guided by voices from that community. More than 200 East Ridge citizens and park users participated in the public involvement activities for this plan. The responses, both positive and negative, were reviewed by the project team and city leaders. The results form the basis for most of the recommendations and action steps presented throughout this document.

Many concerns will be resolved by actions already being taken by the city, such as reconstructing Exit 1 to improve access into Camp Jordan Park, and including restrooms in the proposed upgrades at Camp Jordan's baseball fields. In response to the survey, the Parks and Recreation department has added rangers to provide increased security in Camp Jordan. Other concerns will be addressed as the city implements this plan and invests in new and upgraded recreation facilities.

A summary of the community input responses are provided below. Specific responses from each activity are provided in the sections which follow.

Current Conditions

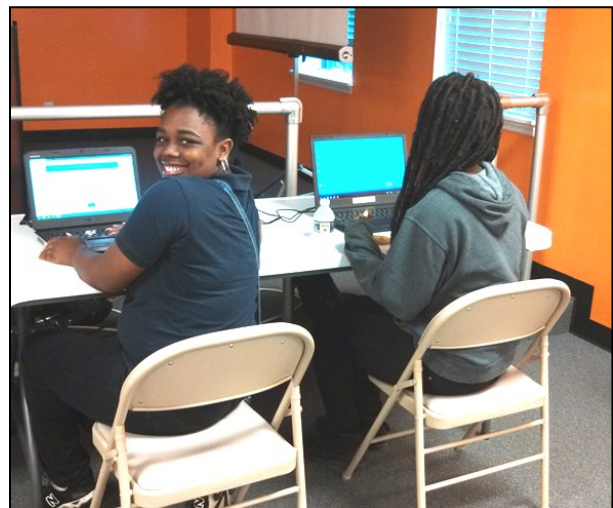
- Camp Jordan is the most-used recreation facility in the city.
- Walking and jogging are the most popular recreation activities reported by respondents. Playgrounds, organized sports, and swimming are also popular.

Safety

- Most respondents felt that the recreation facilities and activities in East Ridge are relatively safe.
- Those who did identify safety concerns focused on the parking areas and walking track at Camp Jordan, and unsupervised teens and the condition of the playground equipment at Pioneer Frontier.

New Activities and Facilities

- Most requests for new recreation activities focused on programming other than youth sports. Respondents requested more options for teenagers and adults.
- Respondents would like to see events intended for East Ridge families not only at Camp Jordan Park, but at other locations in the city as well.
- Requests included more planned activities such as exercise classes, crafts, farmers markets, outdoor concerts and movies, and activities for teens at the community center.
- Many respondents wanted to see development of recreational facilities outside of Camp Jordan Park.
- The top three new facility requests included:
 1. Walking and running trails
 2. A dog park
 3. Swimming pool or splash pad



Participants at April 24, 2017 Input Meeting
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

Community Involvement Meetings

Community Input Meeting

City of East Ridge Parks & Recreation



**9:00AM Saturday, April 1, 2017
East Ridge Community Center
1517 Tombras Avenue**

**Please join us and share your ideas as the
city updates its parks & recreation plan.
Your input will help East Ridge improve its
recreation facilities and programs!**

[Flyer for April 1, 2017 Community Input Meeting](#)
[Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development](#)

City staff and the project team hosted two public involvement meetings: the first on the morning of April 1, 2017, a Saturday; and the second during the evening on April 24, 2017, a Monday. The different days and times were an attempt to accommodate different work schedules and time commitments.

Approximately 30 individuals participated in the public involvement meetings. Although turnout was less than anticipated, the smaller numbers allowed staff to truly engage and have in-depth conversations with participants about their ideas and desires for recreational facilities and programming. The meetings also afforded city staff opportunities to discuss community concerns with East Ridge citizens.

The meetings were conducted in the Orange Room at the community center. Each session included the same stations in order to provide consistency across both events. The stations and feedback received from each are provided below. Guests checked in at a sign-in table and also had an opportunity to stop at a East Ridge Parks and Recreation information booth. Interactive stations included an idea wall, online survey station, and mapping station. Results from the community involvement meetings are provided on the next page.

Idea Wall

At the Idea Wall station, participants were asked to write responses to a series of prompts on poster sheets displayed on the wall. If an idea with which they agreed was already written, participants could place a check mark to express their support for that idea. The prompts were broad and intended to elicit a wide range of responses. The prompts and responses are displayed below.



Community members at the Idea Wall
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development

PROMPT #1: What is one recreation activity that you or your family have done in another community that you really enjoyed?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Tally</u>
Swimming.....	4
Tennis.....	3
Football.....	1
Shooting.....	1
Bike Trails.....	1
YMCA.....	1
Citywide community events.....	1
Hiking trails in Prentice Cooper.....	1

PROMPT #2: What is your favorite activity to do in East Ridge?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Tally</u>
Walking.....	5
Basketball.....	2
Visiting the library.....	1
Playgrounds.....	1
Rec sports at Camp Jordan.....	1
Tennis.....	1
Running on Missionary Ridge (Crest Road).....	1

PROMPT #3: What type of recreation activities would you like to see in East Ridge?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Tally</u>
Dog park.....	4
Pool/splash pad.....	4
Outdoor exercise stations.....	3
New football team for recreation center.....	2
Yoga.....	2
More activity in rec center for teens (ping pong, billiards, etc.).....	2
Skateboard park.....	2
Book fairs.....	2
Tennis.....	2
Cooking seminars.....	1
Antique shows.....	1
Classes for learning skills like bicycle repair.....	1
Playground equipment for handicapped/disabled.....	1
Pickle ball.....	1
More parks.....	1
Comprehensive vision for the McBrien building/ city hall.....	1
Neighborhood pocket parks.....	1
Exercise equipment.....	1
Farmers market.....	1
Literacy events.....	1
Basketball at Camp Jordan.....	1
Clean restrooms at Camp Jordan.....	1

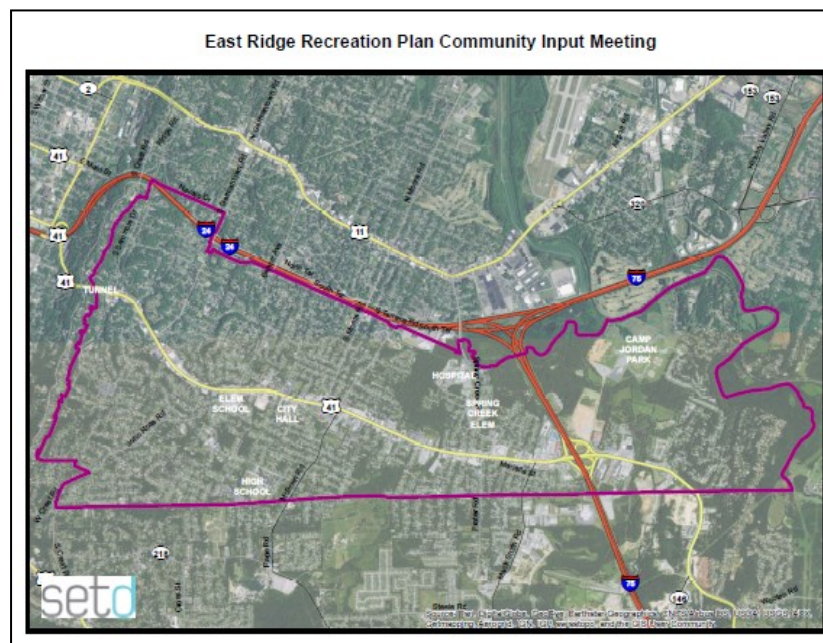
Mapping Station

At the Mapping Station, participants were shown large maps of East Ridge and engaged in discussions about current and potential future locations of recreation areas. They were also provided with small maps, on which they were asked to draw and provide comments. The project team collected the map responses and created the Results Map on the opposite page.

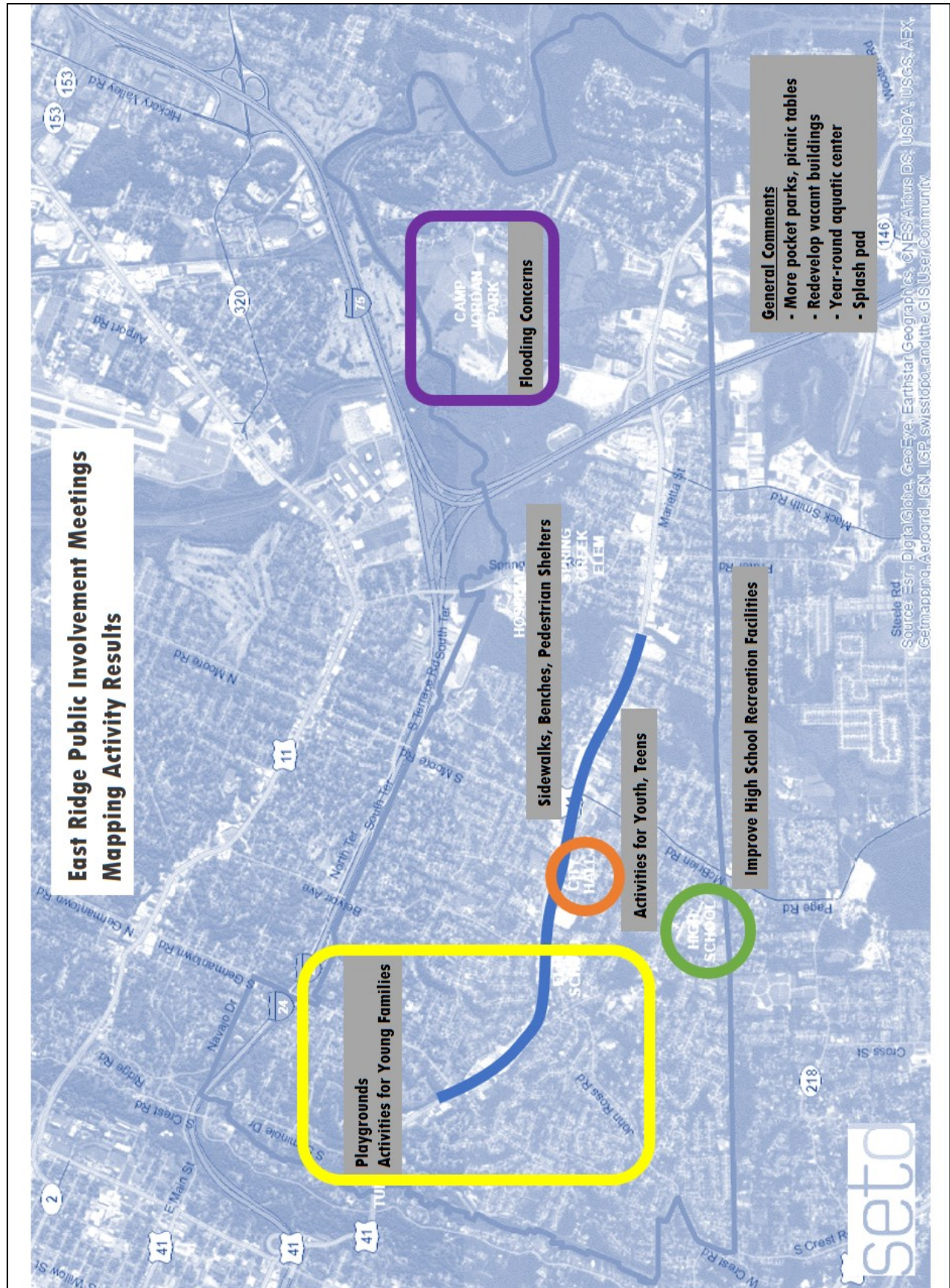
Asking participants to consider the spatial distribution of recreation sites brought forth suggestions for improved access and mobility throughout the city. Several participants wanted to see more neighborhood pocket parks. Others expressed a need for better pedestrian and bike infrastructure along Ringgold Road. This exercise further reinforced that additional recreation opportunities are needed throughout the city.



Mayor Brent Lambert discusses recreation ideas with Dick Cook of East Ridge News Online.
Image Source: Southeast Tennessee Development



Sample of map distributed to participants at the community involvement meetings.



Public Input Online Survey

During March and April of 2017, residents had the opportunity complete an online SurveyMonkey questionnaire which requested for information and comments on a range of recreation topics. A total of 205 participants completed the survey, 173 of which were citizens of East Ridge. Others are individuals that visit and utilize East Ridge's recreation facilities or participate in the city's sports programs. The results are presented in this section.



Ages of Survey Participants

Answer Choices	Responses	
18 or younger	4.41%	9
18 to 24	3.92%	8
25 to 34	27.45%	56
35 to 44	16.67%	34
45 to 54	19.61%	40
55 to 64	16.18%	33
65 to 74	9.80%	20
75 or older	1.96%	4
Total		204

Gender of Survey Participants

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	52.45%	107
Male	47.55%	97
Total		204

Do any children under 18 live in your household?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	54.68%	111
No	45.32%	92
Total		203

In a typical week, how many days do you exercise?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I do not exercise regularly.	21.57%	44
1 to 2 days per week	25.98%	53
3 to 5 days per week	41.18%	84
6 to 7 days per week	11.27%	23
Total		204

On average, how many days each month do you visit or use one of East Ridge's recreational facilities?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I do not visit any of East Ridge's recreational facilities	17.62%	34
Once or twice a month	31.61%	61
3-5 times per month	16.58%	32
6-10 times per month	11.40%	22
More than 10 times per month	22.80%	44
Total		193

Which of East Ridge's facilities do you use the most? Mark all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Camp Jordan Park	69.84%	132
Community Center/Senior Center	16.93%	32
Curtis Adams Pavilion	2.12%	4
Pioneer Frontier Playground	23.81%	45
Springvale Park	2.65%	5
I do not use East Ridge's recreational facilities	14.29%	27
Another Facility (Please Identify)	4.23%	8
Total Respondents: 189		

For "Another facility," respondents listed the McBrien hitting facility and Brainerd Tennis Courts.

If you do not use East Ridge recreation facilities, what prevents you from doing so?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Lack of desired equipment or amenities	46.51%	40
Not aware of where facilities are located	10.47%	9
I, or my household, participates in activities through church or school and use their facilities instead.	6.98%	6
I, or my household, participates in activities in another community.	9.30%	8
Too far away	10.47%	9
Myself, or a member of my family, has a disability and cannot access the facilities.	3.49%	3
Not interested in recreation	6.98%	6
Other (please specify)	36.05%	31
Total Respondents: 86		

For "Other," respondents provided the following comments (summarized):

- Dog owners at Camp Jordan do not keep their pets on leashes, and the loose dogs jump other pets and people at the park.
- Bike riders on the Camp Jordan walking track ride too fast and make it unsafe for pedestrians.
- Complaints about city staff at various recreation facilities.
- The city should focus on other needs, like paving streets, instead of playgrounds.
- Would like to see more disc golf courses and walking trails.
- Other communities are safer and have better facilities than East Ridge.
- General comments about safety at all facilities.
- Pioneer Frontier is not clean or safe. Playground equipment is in poor condition. Difficult to see children while they are playing.
- Don't know about facilities or programming at facilities. Unaware of current community center programs. Would like to see more night and weekend activities.
- The tennis courts at East Ridge High School are unplayable.
- Concerns about crime and gang activity.
- Some people have private gym and rec club memberships.
- Someone discussed a personal injury which prevents them from using facilities or attending classes without a trained professional present.
- The recreation areas could use more landscaping, flowers, benches, and picnic tables.

What activities do you and your family participate in East Ridge or the surrounding region? Mark all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Playing on the playground	42.93%	82
Walking/Running	71.20%	136
Biking	34.03%	65
Canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding	19.37%	37
Tennis	5.24%	10
Dog Walking	36.13%	69
Picnicking	19.37%	37
Wildlife viewing	24.61%	47
Rock climbing	5.24%	10
Football	16.23%	31
Baseball/Softball	35.08%	67
Soccer	16.23%	31
Volleyball	3.14%	6
Disc Golf	14.66%	28
Skateboarding/Rollerblading	3.14%	6
Basketball	16.23%	31
Pickleball	1.05%	2
Yoga	10.47%	20
Golf	5.24%	10
Group workout classes	6.28%	12
Swimming	21.99%	42
None	2.09%	4
Other (please specify)	8.90%	17
Total Respondents: 191		

For "Other," respondents provided the following comments (summarized):

- Fishing
- Bugapalooza
- Weight training
- Cheerleading
- Wrestling
- Lacrosse
- Hiking

What facilities would you like to be made available in East Ridge? Mark all that apply.

Playground facilities	34.46%	61
Outdoor pavilions	31.64%	56
Walking/running trails	49.72%	88
Bike trails	29.38%	52
Tennis courts	19.77%	35
Dog park	44.63%	79
Picnic areas	30.51%	54
Wildlife viewing areas and trails	32.77%	58
Football fields	12.99%	23
Baseball/softball fields	16.95%	30
Soccer fields	6.21%	11
Disc golf courses	9.60%	17
Skateboarding/rollerblading parks	10.17%	18
Basketball courts	16.95%	30
Swimming pool or splash pad	47.46%	84
Volleyball courts	7.91%	14
Total Respondents: 177		

For "Other," respondents provided the following comments (summarized):

- Community gardens
- Weight training and fitness for seniors
- A YMCA
- Professionally led group classes
- An indoor walking track
- Line dancing
- New or improved sidewalks along Ringgold Road, McBrien Road, Moore Road, and Bennett Road
- Batting cages
- Updated camping facilities
- Softball fields
- Heated water walking
- Open field of miscellaneous use (e.g. picnics)

How would you rate the safety of East Ridge's parks and recreation facilities?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Not safe	6.32%	12
Somewhat unsafe	16.32%	31
Fairly safe	46.84%	89
Very safe	24.74%	47
N/A, I do not use East Ridge recreational services	5.79%	11
Total		190

With regards to safety and facility conditions, identify specific areas or equipment that should be addressed or repaired.

Summary of responses regarding CAMP JORDAN:

- Safety concerns around the walking track. Address the dark areas—the track should be lit all the way around. Consider installing emergency phones or surveillance.
- Homeless camp in the woods causing safety concerns.
- "Camp Jordan floods too much, is a mosquito pit, and the restrooms are a DISGRACE."
- Need parking improvements. Car break-ins and safety problems in parking lots.
- Improve access and traffic entering and leaving the park.
- Uncontrolled animals and dogs off leashes.
- "Camp Jordan Park ball fields should be bulldozed and all new facilities should be put back!!!"
- Improve the stands at the baseball fields. New batting cages are needed.
- Replace the concession stands and bathrooms.
- Would like to see a cooling station for the baseball and softball season.
- Improve drainage on the soccer fields.
- The spinning piece at the playground is constantly broken.
- Suggestion for bike patrols by police.
- Would like to see a dog park.
- Would like to have sidewalks along the roads.

Summary of responses regarding the MUNICIPAL COMPLEX and PIONEER FRONTIER:

- Pioneer Frontier needs to be improved. It is "trashy" and "dilapidated" The equipment is "very weathered and could use a refresh similar to Imagination Station in Collegedale."
- Concerns about unsupervised youth and teenagers at Pioneer Frontier. Problems persist even though the police station is nearby. Parents have concerns taking their own children there.
- Respondents would like to see better enforcement of existing rules at Pioneer Frontier.
- Pioneer Frontier has a lot of skateboarders.

Responses continue on the next page.

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Summary of responses regarding SPRINGVALE PARK:

- Concerns about suspicious activity and child safety at Springvale Park.
- There is nothing at Springvale Park—do something with it!

Summary of responses regarding EAST RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL:

- Improve the tennis courts.

Summary of responses regarding ALL RECREATION FACILITIES and other comments:

- Many problems with insects, especially fire ants and wasps.
- Concerns about people using drugs in parks, and other crime such as vehicle break-ins and theft. Suggestion to install security cameras or to have security patrols.
- Bathroom facilities are often locked.
- Would like to see a dog park somewhere in East Ridge.
- Would like to see tennis courts somewhere in East Ridge, with a wall to hit against like Brainerd.
- Need places for teens to be able to hang out; need more activities and programs.
- There are too many money lending establishments, tattoo parlors, pawn shops, and extended stay hotels along Ringgold Road.

What of the following statements represent you? Mark all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
I do not use any of East Ridge's parks or recreational facilities, and likely won't even if changes are made.	1.73%	3
The city's current recreational facilities and program offerings are adequate. No changes should be made.	4.62%	8
I use the city's recreational facilities, but they do not fully meet my needs or expectations.	42.77%	74
I, or my children, use the playground equipment but are concerned that it is outdated or unsafe.	18.50%	32
Maintenance at one or more facilities is a problem.	21.97%	38
I would like to see more recreational opportunities other than Camp Jordan.	58.96%	102
The city should use tax dollars and apply for grants to make the city more bike friendly.	23.70%	41
I, or someone I know cannot access one or more recreation sites due to a handicap or disability.	8.09%	14
I, or someone in my household, participates in one of the city's organized sports leagues.	23.12%	40
I would like to see more organized activities and events (e.g. outdoor movies, 5K runs, live music.)	42.77%	74
The city's recreational areas are convenient and easy to access from where I live.	38.73%	67
Total Respondents: 173		

What kind of events would you like to see? What time of year?

Summary of responses:

- Events to engage teenagers all of the time
- Basketball, spring basketball, summer basketball
- Older semi-pro basketball
- Carnivals and festivals
- Fireworks at Camp Jordan
- Swimming/a pool
- Movies and concerts in the park
- Competition challenge courses; mud runs; 5ks
- Year-round family-friendly events
- Farmers market
- Reopening the road to Audubon Park
- More events other than sports at Camp Jordan
- Small business events and fairs
- Pumpkin Patch; trunk-or-treat
- Winter Wonderland
- Senior activities and trips on a regular basis
- Alcohol sales during concerts at the pavilion
- More yoga
- Sports camps
- Car shows
- Summer wrestling
- Quilting, sewing, knitting classes
- A community book club
- Archery
- Junior golf league/camp/tournament
- Events celebrating Native American and Latin American culture
- Marathons
- Bike racing
- More activities and facilities accessible for persons with disabilities; shade for older persons with sun sensitivity
- More soccer
- Outdoor non-religious events and meets
- Adult sports leagues
- Kite-flying at Camp Jordan
- Programs to promote biking
- Canoeing, kayaking, and paddle boarding
- Chattanooga Symphony concerts
- Community clean-up events
- Beer and food festivals
- Football fields

With regards to the city's recreational facilities and programs, do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Summary of responses:

- While the new playground at Camp Jordan is aesthetically pleasing, it is not practical to use. The toddler area is too basic, yet the older kid area is too challenging for kids in the 3-6 year range. The equipment is tall and spaced for older children.
- Offer equipment rentals with a deposit.
- Would like to see a swimming pool put back into East Ridge.
- Don't spend money on things that only benefit a few people. Don't pay for over priced beautification in flood areas.
- Do something on the North end that is at least comparable to the old Spring Creek Park or the Town Hall park before the new Town Hall.
- Reconstruct Exit 1 to improve access to Jordan Crossing and Camp Jordan Park.
- Improve enforcement of rules at Pioneer Frontier, especially when it comes to unsupervised older children and teenagers.
- Too much money is invested in baseball and not other areas.
- Would be neat to see McBrien razed and a gated condo community there with addition of dog park, etc.
- Would be neat to see Ringgold road routed around a square at city center with something nice in the center.
- I would love to see Camp Jordan become a premier facility. Its convenient location is ideal for state-of-the-art facilities.
- "As an East Ridge resident, I believe in the vision to move our city forward and attract quality businesses and residents once again. I have bought into this city...recently building a house here. Make East Ridge a proud place to be again. I trust our leadership has this vision too."
- "Reopening the road to Audubon park would be great."
- Update Pioneer Frontier—"I'm sure others in the community would love to be involved just like when it was first built."
- Plant a community garden to benefit community kitchens or families in need.
- Establish wildflower meadows beautify the city and provide habitat for endangered bees.
- Would like to see mountain biking trails.
- Make Springvale Park more like a real park.
- Provide more opportunities and activities for teenagers and youth.
- "East Ridge has great potential to be so much better than it is currently. It really needs to be made much more safe and family friendly. Pawn shops and tattoo parlors... on Ringgold Road need to go. My husband and I travel outside of East Ridge in search of fun things to do."
- "Dog park!"
- "I fully understand that organized sports bring money and visitors to Camp Jordan but not all residents and families enjoy organized sports. The Community Center should be better utilized. ALL activities should be well publicized. I have driven through Camp Jordan before with things going on, a paintball championship, disk dogs, etc., but was only able to enjoy it because I happened upon it."
- "Everything cannot be held only at Camp Jordan. There are a lot of the citizens that live between City Hall and the tunnels."
- Do something to better utilize the property at Springvale Park.
- "If the softball/ baseball fields, dugouts, fences, irrigation/field drains, walk ways, restroom facilities, and stands were updated to top of the line, it would be the best thing for the park!! As the old saying goes, 'If you build it, they will come!!!"

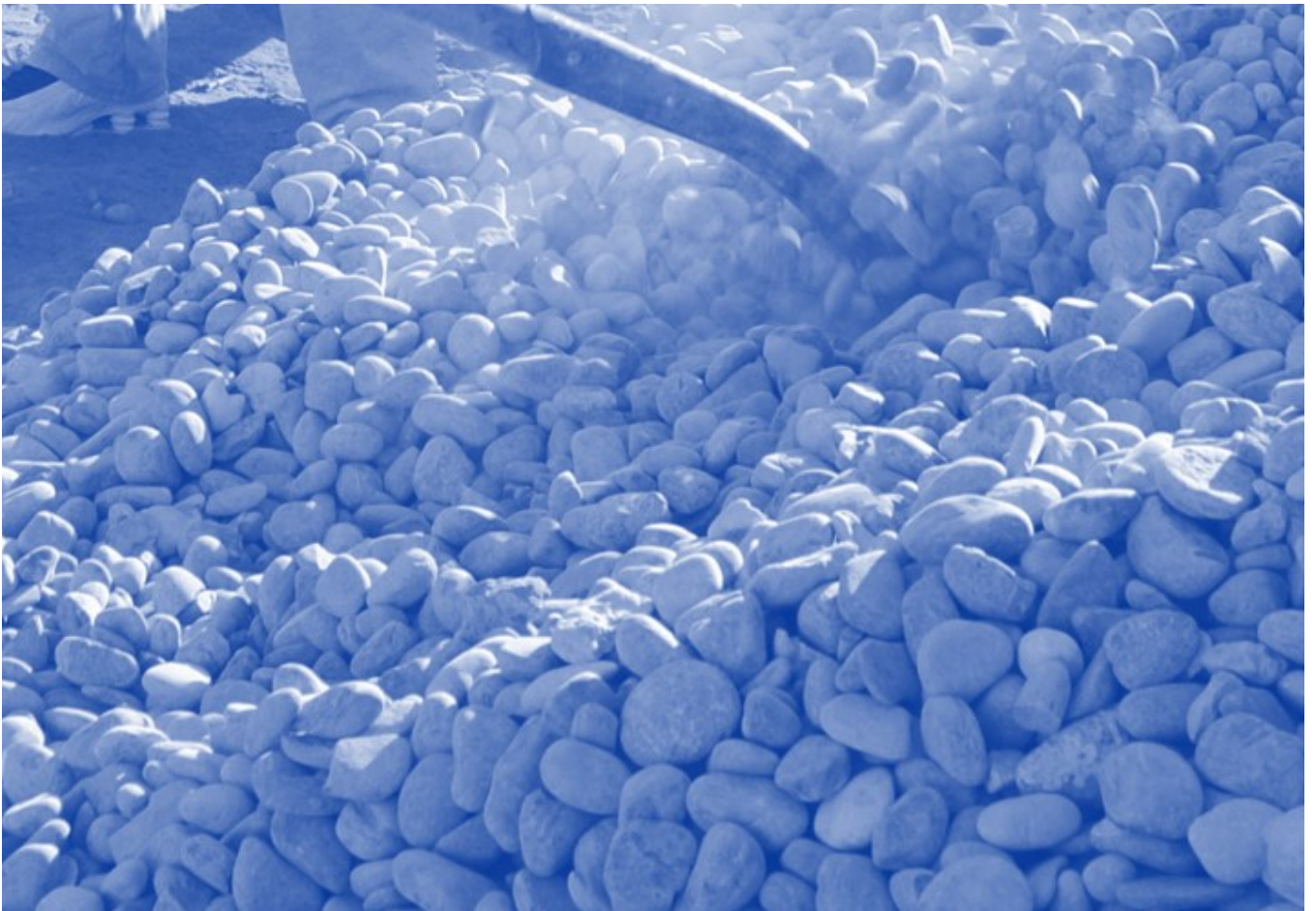
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- Improve the mobile app and keep it updated.
- "Don't spend \$15 million at Camp Jordan... The world doesn't revolve around Camp Jordan!"
- "Stop wasting our tax dollars on Exit 1 beautification!"
- "The ballfields look great!"
- Traffic is a problem during major events at Camp Jordan.
- There were compliments as well as complaints for some of the parks & rec staff.
- "It seems there are ample sports activities for the youth, but I think it would be nice to offer more activities for adults of all ages. When people meet and get to know one another, they become friendlier, more tolerant and more interested in joining together to build a better community."
- The batting cages should be improved.
- There are concerns about the commercial areas near the current entrance to Camp Jordan.
- "I went to the East Ridge Rec Center looking to play pick up basketball and was told it cost money to play. It wasn't a very large amount, but I felt that was ridiculous. A resident of east ridge should be allowed to play pickup basketball at the rec center without having to pay cash at the door."
- Restroom facilities at all parks need to be improved.
- Need to improve the parking areas around the ballfields at Camp Jordan.
- Would like to see more picnic areas.
- Add a smaller walking track at Camp Jordan.
- Add water fountains around the walking track at Camp Jordan.
- Offer canoe rentals at Camp Jordan.
- Add a high ropes course at Camp Jordan.
- "A splash pad would be awesome."
- Bring back the East Ridge tennis team.
- Requests for increased police presence at Camp Jordan.
- Make East Ridge more bike-friendly.
- Move basketball to Camp Jordan instead of the community center.
- Don't charge East Ridge residents to park during events at Camp Jordan, when they are only trying to access the park.
- Invest in other sports besides baseball and softball.



Implementation Strategies



Plan Into Action

Implementing the recommendations proposed by this plan will require substantial time and funding commitments. This process can be made easier, however, with proper planning, community involvement, and an understanding of available funding sources. This section is intended to provide the city with information and suggestions on how to best bring this plan's recommendations to fruition.

Over the next 5 years, the City of East Ridge can expect significant change and development. Jordan Crossing will likely be fully developed, Exit 1 construction will be finished, and the city will have started work on the East Ridge Town Center. The

pedestrian enhancement projects along Ringgold Road will be complete, providing a major improvement in pedestrian connectivity and aesthetics throughout the commercial corridor. These public investments will motivate business and home owners to invest in their properties, bringing new life to the city's commercial and residential neighborhoods. The recreation projects in this plan will complement and expedite other redevelopment efforts by providing public spaces that are essential for community building and engagement. Creating a more livable and vibrant community will attract young professionals and new families, and be cause for celebration by the city's longtime residents.

Priority Projects

Priority projects have been selected based on the following criteria:

- **Community support.** Projects that were identified by the community through the public involvement process.
- **Addressing major facility needs.** Projects which enhance existing facilities, or which bring recreation facilities to underserved areas.
- **Funding availability.** Projects that have identified funding or the potential to be funded through grants, donations, partner contributions, volunteer labor, or other existing funding sources.
- **Increasing recreation access and opportunities.** Projects which expand access to recreational facilities and programming. This includes expanding access to underserved areas of the city, as well as underserved populations.
- **Strengthening the community.** Projects that strengthen identity, safety, and livability of the East Ridge community. This includes projects that provide recreation access, support social cohesion, attract tourism, or support other city initiatives.

Priority Recreation Projects:

1. **Improve Pioneer Frontier playground**
2. **Upgrade baseball facilities , restrooms, and concessions at Camp Jordan Park**
3. **Construct a splash pad at the municipal complex**
4. **Construct a dog park at Springvale Park**
5. **Construct an open-air, covered multiuse pavilion at the municipal complex**

Funding Options

Funding for the identified priority projects as well as other recreation initiatives may be implemented through a variety of funding options including, but not limited to, the sources identified below.

- **Local Government Sources.** Some of the projects in this plan may be eligible for funding by the Border Region Sales Tax. Others may simply be funded through the budget by the East Ridge city council. Large scale projects with a demonstrated regional impact may be funded collaboratively with other local governments in the area.
- **Capital Improvement Plan.** The City of East Ridge should consider adopting a capital improvement plan that incorporates a maintenance and improvement schedule for recreation facilities over the next 5 years.
- **Grants.** East Ridge may apply for grants from public and private sources to help fund recreation projects. One opportunity through is the state's Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF). The LPRF request may be up to \$500,000, which requires equal matching funds by the city. Potential private funding sources include the U.S. Tennis Association, which may help upgrade existing tennis courts or install new facilities. Animal charities may help build or furnish a dog park.
- **Community partnerships and foundations.** The city may partner with community groups to conduct fundraisers, have supplies donated, and organize volunteers to construct and implement projects. Local clubs and foundations may also be engaged to assist with project funding.
- **User and facility fees.** Certain facilities, programs, and events could offset operational expenses, or even generate revenue, through use, rental, and membership fees. Recreation equipment rental programs could be paid for through modest rental fees. Classes and special programs could require payment or membership dues. There were several complaints about additional fees and surcharges in the public input survey; however, such fees do help offset operating costs and allow for programs that otherwise would not be cost-effective.

Community Engagement

In order for the projects recommended in this plan to be successful, the city must engage the community and include them in the decision-making process.

- **Citizens Advisory Committees.** CACs provide critical public review and oversight of government projects. The level of engagement varies, but an effective CAC will have a voice and input in the public decision-making process. A CAC or similar community group is recommended for the Pioneer Frontier Rebuild. Because the playground was funded and built by the community in the 1990s and is still cherished by many residents, citizens—including those helped build the original playground—should have some say in the new Pioneer Frontier playground.
- **Stakeholder and community meetings.** Before deciding on a final design for the splash pad or other projects such as the East Ridge Town Center, the city should have meetings that meaningfully engage members of the public and various stakeholder groups. By identifying the needs and desires of these groups beforehand, the project will enjoy community support and benefit all parties in the long run.
- **Public-private partnerships.** The city can construct and provide recreation facilities, but it does not necessarily need to schedule and provide all of the programming at these facilities. Exercise classes, youth activities, the future farmer's market—there are opportunities to have outside groups to organize and facilitate these programs. This lessens the city's burden and also helps to engage groups within the East Ridge community.

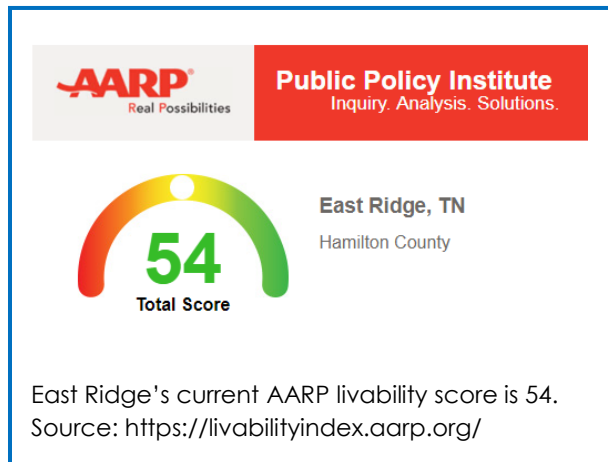
Monitoring and Evaluation

As the city updates its existing facilities and adds new recreation amenities, it would do well to evaluate its facilities on an ongoing basis, and monitor for other potential impacts from its investments.

- **Utilization of existing and new facilities.** The city should perform a before-and-after comparison of Camp Jordan once the facilities have been upgraded. Are more people using the park? Are more East Ridge residents attending events and programs? On average, how many people visit the Springvale dog park on any given day? Answers to these questions will help inform the city's efforts to improve recreation opportunities and meet citizen needs.
- **Resident satisfaction.** East Ridge enjoys many benefits from sports tournaments and other special events at Camp Jordan. Are these events meeting the needs of the citizens of East Ridge? The proposed projects in this recreation plan are an attempt to improve recreation access and programming for East Ridge residents and families. In the coming years, surveys and other public engagement tools should be used measure improvement and progress of meeting citizens' recreation needs. These results can be used to inform future recreation plans and projects.
- **Economic impacts.** An update to the economic impact study of Camp Jordan should be completed in the next 3-5 years. In addition, East Ridge should also monitor other economic measures such as property values, tax revenues, and household income to determine if the livability investments the city is making are improving the economic standing of East Ridge families and the city as a whole.
- **Safety and maintenance.** Building new amenities and upgrading damaged equipment should result in increased safety and reduced maintenance costs. Also, if the city takes steps to better enforce existing rules and adds security features, safety concerns at playgrounds, walking tracks, and parking lots should decrease. There will always be some risk and unexpected incidents—but the city

should monitor for lower incidents of crime, theft, and vandalism. Safety can also be evaluated in future public surveys.

- **Health impacts.** Recreation promotes physical activity and healthier lifestyles. The Tennessee Department of Health monitors a wide range of health factors across the state. East Ridge should monitor the data for improvements in its health outcomes.
- **Nationwide rankings.** Numerous organizations publish studies that rate local communities for factors such as walkability, bike safety, green space, affordability, business climate, and more. Examples include the AARP and Livability.com. While the criteria and methodology should always be investigated, East Ridge may use improvement in these scores and rankings to measure progress.



Ongoing Commitment to Planning

As the City of East Ridge continues to improve its recreation facilities, public infrastructure, city services, and as new businesses invest and neighborhoods become revitalized, an ongoing commitment to planning will ensure quality development that meets the community's needs.

- **Update the Recreation Plan every 5 years.** The city should review its recreation plan on an ongoing basis. As projects are completed and the city advances, new concerns, needs, and opportunities should be identified and incorporated into the plan. Updating the recreation plan is also a good opportunity to engage the public, city staff, and elected officials, and elevate conversations about recreation needs into the public forum.
- **Expand the city's planning program.** A city the size of East Ridge should have a full-time planner, especially with all of the projects going on in the city. Planning staff could develop area plans, complete special studies, update zoning and other regulatory documents, focus on community engagement in the planning process, and help coordinate various city projects.